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EITHER WITH US OR AGAINST US: BRITISH PERCEPTIONS OF THE IRISH IN WORLD WAR TWO

ABSTRACT

Literature on Anglo-Irish relations in the Second World War has suggested that in British popular and political discourse the neutral Irish were felt complacent, short-sighted, stubborn, stupid, and cowardly. Extreme opinion held them treacherous. However, there was significant Anglo-Irish intelligence collaboration, many Irish served in the British Forces and a significant contribution was made by Irish immigrant labour during the war. Yet ambivalent and dismissive perceptions of the Irish continued and grew during World War Two. This thesis will examine the ways in which contemporary popular perceptions of "Irishness" were affected by cultural antipathy, the actions of the Irish state, the influx of immigrant Irish workers and the recruitment of Irish volunteers into the British Armed Forces, during the years of 1939-1945. Key questions that appear here are whether the shifting circumstances of war changed attitudes to the Irish, and further if, at time of extreme threat to Britain and her Empire, was Ireland, though neutral, considered an enemy.

Concentrating on the public discourse on the Irish states conduct during the war, attitudes towards Irish people and British experiences of Irish immigrant workers and Irish people in the British Forces, this survey will illuminate the depth and breadth of ambivalence towards Eire and its people. It is found that the key to British understanding was acquiescence to British influence, even if this was against the wishes of the Irish people. It is the main contention of this thesis that, because of non-acquiescence, the Second World War was the point when Britain psychically ejected 'Irishness' from its national identity, casting the Irish as irredeemably 'other', even before Ireland seceded from the Commonwealth. It is also concluded that due to influence of this ejection, for many Eire, though neutral, was perceived as if she were an enemy to Britain.

DECLARATIONS AND STATEMENTS

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

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STATEMENT 1

This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by citations giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

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Dedicated to Rifleman Stephen E. Alldridge (2RB),

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A NOTE ON NATIONAL TERMS

Throughout this thesis when referring to Ireland in periods before 1922 ‘Ireland’ refers to the whole island of Ireland.

Thereafter ‘Ireland’, the ‘Irish Free State’, the ‘South’ and ‘Eire’ refer to the twenty-six counties that now comprise the Republic of Ireland.

The six county statelet of Northern Ireland is referred to in its shortened form as NI, and is occasionally referred to as ‘Ulster’, as this is commonly used by its inhabitants.

‘British’ and ‘Britain’ refers to the nations of the island of Great Britain.

ABBREVIATIONS

CIGS	Chief of Imperial General Staff
CTA	Common Travel Area
G2	Eire Military Intelligence
HI	Home Intelligence
IRA	Irish Republican Army
MI5	Military Intelligence Home Division
MI6	Military Intelligence Foreign Division
MI9	Military Intelligence Escape Division
MO	Mass Observation
MOI	Ministry of Information
MOL	Ministry of Labour
MOH	Ministry of Health
NI	Northern Ireland
NID	Naval Intelligence Division
POW	Prisoner of War
SIS	Special Intelligence Service

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research on British perceptions of the Irish has concentrated on the period of the largest influx of Irish immigration to Britain, and the most expedient political and economic reforms in Ireland; that is, roughly, the Victorian Age. These studies acknowledge a huge social, economic, and political impact on Britain. The works of Ned Lebow (Lebow, 1973; 1976), L P Curtis (Curtis, 1968, 1971), Michael de Nie (de Nie, 2004), Edward Lengel (Lengel, 2002), Don MacRaild (MacRaild, 1995), Colin Holmes (Holmes, 1988) and Sheridan Gilley (Gilley, 1978) have studied a rich vein of Victorian anti-Irish prejudice and disaffection, and Mary Hickman & Bronwen Walter (Hickman, 1995a, 1995b; Hickman & Walter, 1997; Walter, 2000) have argued this antipathy continued into the late twentieth century. However, a discussion on perceptions of Ireland and the Irish during the Second World War is almost totally absent. There has been no detailed research on British popular opinion or how these attitudes were affected by Irish neutrality and wartime insecurities. It has been generally proposed that this period did not feature a growth in cultural conflict partly because Eire never became strategically vital, but this does not mean there was no Anglo-Irish friction in this period. This thesis will explore in detail contemporary British perceptions of Ireland and the Irish from the beginning of 1939 until the end of 1945, and chart changes in these perceptions, and the consequences of these on Anglo-Irish relations.

The shortfall in research is partly due to differing views of the Irish experience of the war; one of resistance to war, and one of absence from war. The first being non-belligerent experience of war and the second being absence of conflict, from foreign affairs, and absence from the major historical narrative of the period. A recent trend towards historical enquiry into the Irish experience of 'the Emergency', which stresses the constructive and formative effects of the period on the Irish State and national identity, has partially changed these analyses. However, analysis

of the effect of Ireland on British popular opinion is still absent from the historical record, though there were many transnational ties at involved.

Nevertheless, some histories have suggested that Ireland was not as unimportant to Britain in wartime as it appears from the historiography. Kenneth Lunn urged research in this to reveal if this 'hidden history' can be quantified, arguing that what has already been found may represent either 'the tip of the iceberg or its entirety' (Lunn, 1993, p. 107). This thesis will examine contemporary sources and analyse the ways in which popular perceptions of 'Irishness' were affected by long established cultural antipathy, the actions of the neutral Irish state, the influx of immigrant Irish workers and the recruitment of Irish volunteers into the British Armed Forces, during the years of 1939-1945. This survey will show how acquiescence to British influence was the key to understanding of Ireland and the Irish from the British public, even if this was against the wishes of the Irish people. It is the main contention of this thesis that there is sufficient evidence to argue that many British people felt Ireland acted as an enemy toward Britain and, because of her non-acquiescence, the Second World War was when Britain ejected previously held belief that 'Irishness' was a part of British national identity, casting the Irish as culturally, politically and socially 'other', and set the stage for Eire to painlessly leave the Commonwealth. Finally, this was the breaking point for Britain long after the divorce had happened in Eire.

1.2 CONTEXT

It is important to note that while Ireland was rarely seen one of the most important problems of the war by the public, and that its perceived importance fluctuated, however the tone of the discourse is one of the most derogatory. A BIPO poll in November 1940 indicated that only 1.05% of respondents held Ireland to be the most important problem facing Britain at the time, and this number fell to 0.27% in March 1941 (Liddell, Hinton, & Thompson, 1996). In January 1943 the most urgent problem was considered to be 'maintaining supplies from abroad', that is the battle of the Atlantic, argued by 30.35% of correspondents (Liddell et al., 1996) and this issue was most

associated with troublesome Ireland, simultaneously a lasting problem for Britain yet one often ignored.

The role of Ireland is a curious lacuna in Britain's World War Two history. This absence appears alongside a recognition that there were dismissive attitudes Ireland and the Irish. Due to academic dispute over characterisations of Irish 'benevolent neutrality' and its morality, or by excluding Eire due to her non-combatant status, most historical accounts of the Britain and Second World War period mention Ireland in passing, if at all. Some argue the problems created by Irish neutrality proved to be easily avoided and produced no occurrence more problematic than a short-lived umbrage at the loss of the treaty ports. One of the harshest summations of Eire during World War Two is Roy Foster's contention that, in the end, 'Much of Eire's wartime experience simply provides harmless diversion for counter-factual speculation (or the writers of might-have-been thrillers)' (Foster, 1988, p. 561). However, such conclusions are coloured by hindsight; though Eire did prove to be no serious consideration in Hitler's plans for war, contemporaneously this was by no means certain, and a substantial public discourse, based on a cultural expectation of 'disloyalty' from Ireland.

Some historical works have been more charitable than Foster's assessment, but not much less invested in assessing the impact of Eire on Britain's war. Angus Calder's '*The Peoples War*' (Calder, 1969) only mentions Irish neutrality and continued unemployment in Ulster, while Juliet Gardiner's '*Wartime Britain*' (Gardiner, 2004) analyses the IRA campaign of 1939, the incompetence of German intelligence in Eire, the bombing of North and South and the importance of Irish contributions to the British armed forces but does not reflect on how these affected public opinion or perceptions. Even biographies of the Churchill, the most outspoken opponent of Irish neutrality, provide little detail or analysis of his attitude to Ireland. Geoffrey Best's *Churchill: A Study in Greatness* solely notes he 'much resented' Irish neutrality (Best, 2001), and his *Churchill and War* argues that it infuriated him, but goes no further (Best, 2005). Martin Gilbert's monumental biography mentions Eire only twice in relation to the loss of the treaty ports, and a solitary footnote in volume VI relates Churchill's post-war bitter recollection of Chatfield's

failure ‘to state the naval case against his giving away the Irish bases’ (Martin Gilbert, 1983, p. 1122 footnote). Alternatively, Ireland has also been a problem too alien or large to be considered in this period. Mark Connelly sees Ireland as ‘the exception to every rule in this book’ (Connelly, 2004, p. 21), and Sonya Rose also ignores Northern Ireland stating, ‘to have included Ulster in this study… (of the Celtic nations of Britain) would have meant adding considerable length to an already long and complex chapter’ (Rose, 2004, pp. 218-219). Ireland, in this period, it seems, is too anomalous, and so much out of step with the rest of the contemporary world.

Influential in the creation of a history simplified into becoming a story of what did not happen, rather than what did, was FSL Lyons ‘Plato’s Cave’ analogy (Lyons, 1971), which reflects a dismissal of the formative effect of the war on the Irish Republic and its foreign relations. This theory of Ireland’s turning its back on the world can be traced to contemporary discourse during the war and conceptually excuses the absence of the Irish wartime experience from the British historical narrative. But this absence is also partly due to the processes by which transnational ties have become invisible and ignored. Two of these processes are cultural phenomena; a long history of shifting and dismissive historical attitudes to the Irish, and the mythology surrounding of Britain in World War Two. The first is characterised by a longstanding cultural, economic, and political, if often dysfunctional, symbiosis between the two nations of Britain and Ireland, and the second by the almost complete rejection of this symbiosis and an ejection of the Irish element in British culture. A third process is a political one; the formation of an Irish nationality in relation to Britain.

1.3 Historical Attitudes to Ireland

Any discussion of perceptions of the Irish must acknowledge that certain stereotypes, and concepts of ‘Irishness’, have a long, varied, and controversial history. The formation of ‘Irishness’ in British eyes has been ‘processual’ and historical (Garner, 2004, p. 80) and relates to the concurrent formation of ‘Britishness’, which Linda Colley argues defined itself in reaction to the ‘other’ beyond (Colley, 1992, pp. 6,8-9). Leerssen further argues that because any individual has

multiple concentric social identities, the formation of a group identity must concentrate on common criteria, whilst willingly disregarding certain differences. Further, the choice of which differences to ignore 'is essentially random, or at least a free one', so that that they may be affected by circumstance, as and when required (Leerssen, 1996, pp. 22-23). An adaptable identity is therefore required to retain some essential continuity, and this was the process by which Ireland was occasionally useful to Ireland while at the same time being derided for its religion and culture.

Writing of the nineteenth centuries racialization of Irishness, Steve Garner sees '(T)here is no anti-Irish racism in the singular … but a number of climaxes in which specific configurations come to the fore, around the Irish as an underclass, as Catholics in a Protestant state and as racialized Celts in an Anglo-Saxon dominated polity' (Garner, 2004, p. 2). This process is based wholly on the needs of the subjectifying identity; as Leerssen states 'the characterisation of the native Irish was utterly heedless of the attitudes and self-image of the native Irish themselves' (Leerssen, 1996, p. 380). Declan Kiberd has gone so far as to argue that 'the notion of 'Ireland' is largely a fiction created by the rulers of England in response to specific needs at a precise moment in British History' (Kiberd, 1985, p. 85). Thus, reconfiguring and combining of prejudices and stereotypes related to any given situation occurs throughout Anglo-Irish relations. Following this logic, the creation of a truly independent foreign policy, that is neutrality, and the formation of a recognisably Irish State, created by Irish people, proved the Irish had diverged from the path laid out for them by the British, becoming recognisably, uniquely, Irish. This point, for Britain, was reached, not at Irish independence, but by the end of World War Two, and resulted in a rejection of 'Irishness' as part of 'Britishness'.

However, this divergence was preceded by centuries of overlordship whose political justification was buoyed by cultural domination. …. Medieval Papal dispensation to force the Irish Church, which had adapted some elements of faith to win over the Irish, back under the total control of Rome, brought Norman invaders. For Lebow the historical narrative extolling of the civilising virtues of the invaders, together with dismissal of the Irish claim to Christianity, substantiate the dominant British thinking on the Irish and their religion until the middle years of

the nineteenth century (Lebow, 1973, p. 24). For most of the history of Anglo-Irish relations, British political and educated classes thought the Irish, their culture and religion inferior, disingenuous, and suspect. With the reformation and enlightenment there was an additional cultural justification to the religious one, seeing the popular adherence to Catholicism as backward and unthinking. As Bruce Nelson argues 'from the sixteenth century…one comes face to face with a process of racialization rooted in conquest, colonization, and Anglicization' (Nelson, 2012, p. 44), even before concepts Social Darwinian concepts of 'race' had fully emerged. However, the Irish were not yet seen as irredeemable; as Steve Garner points out that the Gaelic Irish were accepted as landholders within the pale as long as they adhered to Anglo-Norman customs (Garner, 2004, p. 76), or displayed a relationship to Protestantism, the benchmark of 'civilisation' (Garner, 2004, p. 75). However, the continuity of Irish culture, and of the Catholicism in Ireland, came to symbolise resistance and exemplify the failure of the new order.

By the end of eighteenth-century popular culture had created stage archetypes which emphasised British contempt for, and the harmlessness of, all things Irish (Hayton, 1988, p. 11), with two distinct types: the violent, treacherous alien 'other' and the contemptible, stupid, inferior 'other' (Hickman, 1995b, p. 26). Such dualistic attitudes allowed the colonizers to disengage from the causes of cultural antithesis and provided explanation and justification for repressive action. However, this created a dichotomy where Ireland was 'too distant to be understood, too close to be ignored' (Lyons, 1982, p. 12). However, the greatest change in perceptions of the Irish occurred '…in the nineteenth century…at a juncture in which processes of class formation and nationalisation ensured that they would be a very visible minority' (Hickman, 1995b, p. 80).

The Industrial revolution caused deep disruption to the British working classes at the time famine and the economic collapse of Irish industries made it imperative for Irish workers to leave their home country. For Victorian Irish migrants, their 'otherness' had already been established, but they were now stigmatised as a threat to British employment and welfare. For Garner contemporary views posited the Irish were treated as 'simultaneously a substitute workforce

capable of cutting wages and strikebreaking, and inveterately indolent claimants of poor law funds' (Garner, 2004, p. 118). National and local government commissions confirmed a conception that the Irish were often content to live in very basic and debased conditions (Hickman, 1995b, pp. 72-73), and police, poor law guardians and politicians worked within a discourse where migrant characteristics, rather than industrialisation, created their poor living conditions. Such perceptions justified Victorian scientific theories of racial difference and social Darwinism combining to portray Irish migrants as a race of uncivilised animals, simultaneously the Fenian 'Celtic Caliban', and the child-like innocent female Erin, in need of protection from her 'brother' John Bull'[1]. The Irish were now, by reason of birth, irredeemably 'other'. The Manchester and Clerkenwell attacks were thus downplayed in favour of purely criminal motivation (de Nie, 2004, p. 162), encouraging the perceptions of Irish nationalists as animalistic thugs.

Nevertheless, for Britain, Irish migration had its utility in getting unpalatable work done and in fighting for the Empire, and those who worked in these interests were lionised, as a 'martial race'. The removal of prohibition on Catholic recruits resulted in the transfer of Catholic recruitment from the armies of the continent to the British army (Bartlett & Jeffery, 1996, p. 11). By 1830 42% of the British army were Irish born (Spiers, 1996, p. 337), as were 40% of British soldiers in India by the 1850's (Bielenberg, 2000, p. 223). However, thereafter Irish recruitment progressively dropped until in 1913 when only 9.6% of the Army were Irish (Jeffery, 1985, p. 219), but scions of the Protestant landed class formed an estimated 16% of the officer class in 1914 (Spiers, 1996, p. 341), once more showing religion and class were still important in distinguishing the most useful Irish from the rest. Yet persistent assumptions of untrustworthiness meant the likelihood of a man from an Irish regiment in World War One being sentenced to death by Court Martial was four times that of any other British soldier (Oram, 1998, p. 59). Indeed, the proportion of Irish death sentences was actually higher before the 1916 Rising than after it (Oram, 1998, p. 69), which testifies to the persistence of the Irish stereotype rather than reflecting Irish

[1] See (Curtis, 1968, 1971), (Lebow, 1976) and (de Nie, 2004)

'treachery'. As Bartlett & Jeffrey concur 'it was the attitudes and expectations of others that defined the battlefield behaviour of Irish soldiers' (Bartlett & Jeffery, 1996, p. 18).

Some have doubted the effect of such divisive stereotypes (Foster, 1995; Peatling, 2005) and Curtis argues that British prejudices had always involved elements of class, religion, and race but the dominance of racialized views, after 1860, did not amount to any significant change in overall attitude of Irish inferiority (Curtis, 1968, p. 16). But the sheer volume of prejudicial material found in the Victorian era in political discourse and popular culture cannot be underestimated in its cumulative effect; class, race and religion are parallel discourses, taking on contextually different emphases, each mutually re-enforcing the other (McVeigh, 2002, p. 151). It is implausible that with the growth of popular entertainments, literacy, population, industry, and urbanisation, combined with a huge influx of Irish migrants, the volume and scope of cultural stereotypes did not have cultural, if not political, influence.

Though the Irish 'character' was of conditional utility to Britain, deeper cultural differences have been suggested as irreconcilable, because Irish culture persisted. De Nie argues the British developed over time a dialogue where, in order to come to terms with a history of coercion and conflict, it is insisted that 'any debt owed to the Irish had long since been repaid and all misdeeds committed by Britain were the responsibility of previous generations' (de Nie, 2004, p. 176). This leads to a corollary that the Irish cherish hatreds that are hundreds of years old, with the effect that 'the English do not remember any history, the Irish forget none' (MacDonagh, 1992, p. 1). Oliver MacDonagh sees the English view as one of 'Whig history', sequential, developmental, objective and where the past should be forgotten in order to reach the ideal future, whereas the Irish view sees morality outside of time, where a wrong is a wrong no matter when it occurred, forgiven yet not forgotten (MacDonagh, 1992, p. 6). Additionally, Irish culture still held different native conceptions of property, more communal and self-regulating (MacDonagh, 1992, pp. 45-46) rather than individual ownership, remained, and a new politics, one more based on identity, culture, and nationalism, rather than on than on ideology and party allegiance, emerged (MacDonagh, 1992, pp. 66-67). Yet British popular opinion often did not accept that

Irish cultural differences meant Ireland was a separate nation. This resulted in ill-fated policies such as 'killing Home Rule with kindness', which saw attempts to win independence as reaction to bad governance rather than a desire for self-government (Boyce, 1991, p. 281). However, by the twentieth century the effects of only partial 'Anglicisation' meant a substantial Irish culture remained and British eyes saw Ireland as culturally foreign, yet occasionally of utility, somewhere between colonized and integrated, barbarian and scholar, pagan and Christian, under-developed, yet hardworking and lazy, faithful soldiers but mercenary, cunning yet stupid, comical yet criminal, loyal yet treacherous, and unwanted migrant yet necessary labour, as British necessity dictated. The context of historical popular attitudes to the Irish is vital to understanding British perceptions of the Irish in any historical context, and especially while the 'popular memory' of Britain and World War Two was being forged.

1.4 The People's War and 'Popular Memory'

The second cultural phenomena contextually important to this thesis is the emergence, contemporaneously, of the 'People's War' mythology. This is based on the concept that, when Britain was at its most vulnerable, the whole nation, united, fought alone for the values of freedom, democracy, the rule of law and decency. This cultural memory of World War Two is best conceptualised by Foucault's definition of 'Popular Memory' (Foucault, 1975), which holds that even individual private memories are affected by the dominant political discourses of their time, and that, with further retelling, over time conflict over that memory intensifies, such that there is never unanimity of interpretation. This type of memory is affected most deeply by the passage of time, making contemporary feelings likely to change due to reflection and the influence of other interpretations, and even by subsequent events. The development of 'People's War' mythology began during the war but has grown since to simplify of complex and multi-faceted events and motivations, reducing the Second World War to 'the Good War', one which had to be fought in the face of evil, for the good of mankind. The mythology also connects the sacrifices of war, and the showing that the people 'could take it', with an inevitability that 'they were already

on the way to winning the war' (Taylor, 1965, pp. 502-503), while the people 'remained a peaceful and civilized people, tolerant, patient and generous' (Taylor, 1965, p. 600). A recent, notable exception to the historical lacuna has been Alan Allport's 'Britain at Bay', which admirably argues the sectarian government of Northern Ireland was an example of both Britain's wilful myopia on Ireland and also undermines the myth that Britain was the tolerant, peace-loving 'Little Man of Europe', pushed too far by the Nazi's until going to war (Allport, 2020).

While the mythology is not wholly untrue or untrue, it helped explain post-war political events and create a new British identity by which its people to come to terms with the barbarity of the war, and the loss of life, the deprivation and fear of the war years. Here is a triumph of the 'British way of life', where a previously divided people 'came together as one metaphysical entity', one that overcame divisions of class, religion, and self-interest, and ended in a 'national change of heart that marked the Summer of 1940' (Harris, 1992, pp. 17-18), which engendered a diminished but proud nationhood renewed in sacrifice. Leaving aside the question of the veracity of the myth, it is clear it served a cultural purpose, implicitly believed and offering a popular memory which also explains the present, and moulds expectations of the future (M. Smith, 2000, p. 2). The myth has endured, yet many aspects of life during the war do not fit this mythology, and have tended to be thus absent or ejected, such as blackout crime, wartime anti-Semitism and racism, industrial unrest, the role of British Fascism, and the experience of children and minorities, including Irish immigrants and Irish Forces personnel. Such absence 'suggests a collective cultural amnesia', and in the specific remit of this study, especially regarding 'Irish people's role in a war which was not *their* 'people's war'' (Redmond, 2016a, p. 295).

The 'People's War' mythology was under construction from the start of the war, with neutrality being characterised as a delusion that Europe could survive without a victory over Nazism. The British stance was viewed as a 'plain spoken recognition that everyone was in the same boat and there were no real alternatives to the course Churchill has set' (Mackay, 2013, p. 254). There was *no other course*. Morale was buoyed by Churchill's characterisation of the war as 'Britain standing between civilization and barbarism' encouraging feeling that, with the stakes

being so high, only full participation on the British side could be considered a positive contribution. As a result, the growing philosophy of the war held that Britain was stoically choosing to make a stand, alone, if necessary, as neutrality had failed across Western Europe. In contrast Eire had chosen a third course, taking no action, choosing neutrality; a course deemed invalid in the new British mythology. Also interpreted as an easy route, relying on others to protect them and cowardly avoidance of responsibility, Eire was becoming seen as progressively oppositional by detaching itself from the standpoint of Britain and negating British national interest.

As the war proceeded, the accumulated shared experience of life on the Home Front, together with the public discourse about what it meant to be British, served to reinforce people's sense of being part of a national community' (Mackay, 2013, p. 255). To some extent, the home front had united Britons in a time of trial (Mackay, 2013, p. 258) and the rhetoric of all people 'being in the same boat' led to its corollary that the Irish could not be as united when not enduring the same trials that Britons endured. Those Irish who joined the armed forces could be co-opted when sharing the trials and unifying effects of the war, whilst others who did not were oppositional 'outsiders. Thus, the Irish who stayed at home were oppositional to Britain by being *disunited* by the war, and the Irish contribution could be conceptually minimised. This process, I argue led to the ejection of 'Irishness' from Britishness, making it finally alien, and this process was gradual, progressing with every victory, which proved the British stance correct.

1.5 IRISH NATIONALITY

The 1921 Anglo-Irish settlement encouraged historians to bypass continuing constitutional, trade, cultural and transnational links, and like successive British governments, historians have often seen British involvement with Ireland to be only playing a mediatory role between North and South. However, transnational ties remained, not least due to the processual severance of ties to the British Commonwealth. Irish citizens remained British citizens in British law until 1949, and the Common Travel Area (CTA), and special position in British law, has meant that Irish

people have most of the privileges of British citizenship while in Britain. This special position has encouraged the assumption that the Irish have some residual British identity. Additionally, Irish nationality was contested as the Anglo-Irish treaty of in 1921 did little to define Irish nationality, with Irish persons born before this date either repudiating or clinging to their British nationality according to their preference. Between 1937 and 1949 Britain regarded the Irish as British citizens while the Irish government repudiated this creating a period where the Irish could be 'British' or not as circumstance dictated.

For Marella Hoffman historical and contemporary factors enables Irishness to be supressed within the British political subconscious and simultaneously stand out by its absence (Hoffman nee Buckley, 1997, p. 98). Further, Irish immigrants are anomalous by their 'whiteness', European-ness and use of the English language, and Louise Ryan goes so far as to suggest these similarities have singled out the Irish as an inevitable immigrant, with a simplified migration process and acculturation taken for granted (Ryan, 2004, p. 354). However, even today the Irish are not British, but still citizens of the Irish Republic have special status; outside of UK and Commonwealth citizenship, yet not foreign in the eyes of the law (Meehan, 2000, p. 19).

The question of Irish identity is further problematic when considering the Irish in the British armed forces. Historically Irish people in Britain have denounced violent and terrorist activity committed in Britain in the name of Ireland, *and* have served in the British forces, swearing allegiance to the British King, yet also defended the Irish right to self-determination. As Wendy Webster points out all nationalities in the British armed forces, including the Irish, swore an oath to 'King and Country' but retained transnational ties (Webster, 2014, p. 81). Irish men and women in the British forces in wartime professed that in the event of Irish invasion, by allies or axis, they would have deserted and gone to fight for Ireland. This dualistic attitude echoes the popular acceptance of emigration from a homeland that was, despite being unable to support its own population, still 'home'. Such complex identities were often misunderstood in Britain and were often simplified for ease of understanding, leading to the impression that the Irish were still 'British' in loyalty and law. Even as the UK left the European Union, Irish people will still have

rights to work, live and vote in Britain, and will continue to avail of rights, granted by British law, equal to that of a British citizen. That these issues surrounding historical Irish nationality and the effects of the Common Travel Area, are still not widely known, or understood in Britain, has also given the impression to many Britons that citizens of Ireland are still somehow 'British'.

1.6 THESIS STRUCTURE

Several historical works on this period have suggested some specific areas of British concern over Ireland in this period that have been under researched. These have influenced the structure of this thesis by suggesting broad themes that require elaboration. Additionally, these areas of concern tend to coincide with distinctive periods of the war. For example, fear of IRA action was at its height as Britain came to terms with the Fall of her ally France, and the height of reaction against Irish immigrant workers in 1944 when the highest level of production, and immigrant workers, was required. This thesis is structured thematically, but also roughly chronologically, where the various themes of popular opinion on the Irish change with the exigencies of the war.

The period of the 'Phoney / Bore War', September 1939 until May 1940, coincides with reaction to the 1939 IRA 'S-Plan' campaign and the threat of IRA activity in Britain, where assumptions about Ireland were fuelled by memories and impressions of the Anglo-Irish War. Marella Buckley has argued that, in the twentieth century in general, ignorance of Ireland and Irishness amongst the British, and the legacy of the Irish Revolutionary period, contributed to a perception that Irishness nationalism and ethnicity are inherently dangerous (Hoffman nee Buckley, 1997, pp. 96-97). Local histories also cite Anti-Irish behaviour in Coventry related to the 1939 IRA 'S-Plan' bombing campaign (Richardson & Harris, 1972, p. 97), as part of evidence of similar incidents throughout Britain. Kenneth Lunn further argues reaction to the S-Plan requires more study as it clearly elicited social tensions and cast suspicion over the Irish in Britain when Britain was at its most threatened (Lunn, 1993). Moran, however, while noting an Anti-Irish backlash in Birmingham, dismisses any political impact concluding that the war quickly became the cities dominant worry (Moran, 2010, pp. 155-162). Chapter two is intended to go

some way towards Lunn's suggestion that the Anti-Irish backlash over IRA activity was more influential on British public opinion than previously supposed. It also provides a framework around which to assess early opinion and note how opinion of Ireland changed across the period of the war.

Some histories have suggested Irishness was also cast as dangerous in a new way. Coinciding with the Fall of France in 1940, danger was considered as residing not only by action of the IRA, but also by *omission of action* or stubbornness by the Irish State. The main danger was increasingly seen as the likelihood of a successful Irish invasion by the Nazi's, thus encircling Britain. Clair Wills argues, because 'Many Britons were simply unable to absorb the fact that the country was no longer a part of the United Kingdom' (Wills, 2008, p. 5), and a former constituent country pursuing an independent nation so close to Britain pursuing an independent foreign policy was seen as needlessly inviting German aggression. It was also felt that concessions to Irish independence, in the face of growing danger from the continent, were at least ill-advised and at most negligent. Indeed, many began to ask if Irish independence should be allowed to continue.

Differing characterisations of Irish neutrality were to be expected, not least because the rights and responsibilities surrounding the state of neutrality were still contentious. In this context, and with the threat of Nazi domination of Europe, Irish neutrality had to be adapted to Irish circumstance. Some writing from a political science aspect have argued that Irish neutrality was neither neutral, legitimate, or appropriate. Trevor Salmon's 'Unneutral Ireland' (Salmon, 1989) argues Irish neutrality in the Second World War was 'not so much principled neutrality as unprincipled non-belligerency' determined to assert Irish sovereignty without 'upholding of neutral rights or the fulfilling of neutral duties' by circumventing international legal precedent (Salmon, 1989, p.5). Karen Devine disagrees arguing that Salmon's 'legalistic, prescriptive and sortal definition has effectively defined neutrality out of existence' because neutrality in practice has always differed from theoretical definition (Devine, 2008, p.96).

Salmon's argument serves to bolster the argument of those that argue Irish neutrality was illegitimate, by arguing it was incompatible with legal precedents, when, as Devine argues, the 'rules' of neutrality cannot be ignorant of context as they were designed as a reflection of the realities of their time. For Devine any differences in the conduct of neutrality are 'explainable in the context of state interests', and further argues that the Irish practice of neutrality was as clear, legal and credible as any other during the war 'if not more so' (Devine, 2008, p.96), and I would argue de Valera's consistency added to the clarity of Ireland's position. Salmon's denial of a neutrality formed in an Irish context is uncomfortably close to many British opinions that Ireland had no right to adapt her neutrality to her context during the war. It is arguable that British opinion on how Irish neutrality was conducted was deeply affected not only by a sense that Ireland had no right to her independence at British expense but also fear that her independence, and neutrality, could also be harmful. Donal O'Drisceoil characterises 'the double game', played by the Irish government as a tightrope walk between 'a certain consideration for Britain' (MacCartney, 1961, p. 471), and the need to project strict neutrality towards Germany (O'Drisceoil, 1996, p. 292) as a manifestation of Irish attempts to mollify British opinion. However, allowing as much secret cooperation as it was possible to keep hidden, and upheld by rigid censorship and draconian judicial measures, this ensured that secrecy was vital, leaving the door open to misunderstanding or misinterpretation. A British press campaign was able to focus on the issue of the treaty ports, attacking neutrality based on the ethics of reliance upon Royal Naval protection whilst denying British warships a harbour. Edward Corse sees British Newspapers following Churchill's rhetorical lead (Corse, 2008, p. 167) in suggesting that this caused lives to be lost in the Atlantic, repeating, and embellishing suggestions that U-boats could be, or were being, refuelled and resupplied on the Irish West coast (Wills, 2008, p. 116). Corse also argues that the newspapers had the backing of Churchill and printed articles and cartoons 'designed to make the Irish feel ashamed of their neutrality', though he doubts that that many were persuaded by their patronising tone (Corse, 2008, p. 168). Whether working at government behest or not, the newspapers attitudes both reflected and augmented a growing public displeasure at Eire, yet served to strengthen the resolve to retain neutrality. Fisk argues this campaign eventually became an

embarrassment for the British Government, and they urged it be toned down (R Fisk, 1985, p. 287) in the interests of continued co-operation. But, despite evidence to the contrary, and the protestations of those in the know, popular opinion in Britain, in general, followed the simple narrative based on expectation rather than evidence.

Wendy Webster argues because of historical violence enacted by the IRA the neutral Irish 'attracted hostility and suspicion as Fifth Columnists and spies' (Webster, 2014, p. 63), and were considered 'somewhere at the 'enemy' end of the enemy-ally spectrum – a quasi-enemy' (Webster, 2018, p. 70). However, Calder's '*Myth of the Blitz*' acknowledges that 'danger from Ireland seem to have occurred to people in Britain, at all levels, during the paranoid summer of 1940', but argues the Irish Taoiseach de Valera's 'benevolent neutrality, dispelled threats to Britain' (Calder, 1991, p. 66) to the British government. These arguments have informed my enquiry into how Eire was considered as inviting invasion, as a back door into Britain. Though there were secret plans to defend Ireland, with the help of British Forces after a German invasion, fear of encirclement was so great that even a pre-emptive British invasion of Ireland was publicly considered a possibility. There were occasional voices urging calm, but the secretive nature of Anglo-Irish co-operation precluded official comment on such expectations. It also suited the British government that pressure from public and media sources was brought to bear in Ireland. Thus, the public, and most politicians, unknowing or unwilling to believe in Ireland's stance, saw Ireland as an ungrateful potential threat to Britain's safety. Chapter three traces the discourse of Eire representing a danger to the UK.

Influential in the creation of a history simplified was FSL Lyons 'Plato's Cave' analogy, which reflects a dismissal of the formative effect of the war on the Irish State and its foreign relations. The 'Plato's Cave' (Lyons, 1971) theory proposed that the Irish had lived the war 'with their backs to the fire of life and deriving their only knowledge of what went on outside from the flickering shadows thrown on the wall before their eyes by the men and women who passed to and fro behind them' (Lyons, 1971, pp. 557-558) … 'almost totally isolated from the rest of mankind' (Lyons, 1971, p. 557). Further, Lyons argued, 'when …they emerged, dazzled, from

the cave into the light of day, it was to a new and vastly different world' (Lyons, 1971, p. 558). This belittles the experience of Ireland, the Irish, and the Irish diaspora. The 'Plato's Cave' interpretation has endured, but more recent interpretations argue this period a formative process which constructed a truly independent Ireland at a time when most eventualities were outside of Irish control (J. J. Lee, 1989, p. 221). For Eire, risking her independence when this could be avoided, was pointless. This was not turning her back on the outside world, but ensuring that the hard-won independence, and control they had, was preserved. In the terms of the 'Plato's Cave' analogy, for the Irish were protected while the significance of world events could be interpreted. As Clair Wills states, though 'there was no Home Front in Ireland (Eire), …the country was nonetheless shaped by the war' (Wills, 2008, p. 10) and Diarmaid Ferriter argues that 'Despite neutrality, the years of the war have rightly been recognised as something of a watershed in Irish life' (D Ferriter, 2004, p. 358).

Yet between the end of the Battle of Britain and D-Day, Eire was regarded in Britain as out of step with the rest of the world, willingly and deliberately isolationist, to their own detriment. Clair Wills acknowledges a rumbling resentment that '(Ireland's)…neutral stance was (seen as) negative: defensive, distrustful and inward-looking' (Wills, 2008, p. 5). This resentment saw Eire as a place of mystery, alien and no longer sharing the ideals of Britain; a place apart from that seen just six years earlier. But this research of contemporary attitudes shows that British popular opinion was much more invested in Ireland's stance during the war than post-war historical consensus may suggest. Chapter four will assess characterisations of the Irish and the perception that Ireland was becoming a place cut off from the world, becoming more totally 'foreign', backward, and anti-British, and how the British felt about Eire charting a vastly different course than Britain.

Several historians have written of the Irish diaspora in Britain, and many have sought to update the histories of the Victorian period into the post-war world. However, none have explored in detail British perceptions of Irish immigrant workers in World War Two. Lunn (Lunn, 1993), Holmes (Holmes, 1988) and Douglas (Douglas, 2002) have argued this period should be

considered alongside lobbying for the restriction of Irish immigrants in the inter-war years, and it would be a fruitless exercise to consider attitudes towards Irish workers in isolation from the long history of preconceptions and stereotypes projected onto their forebears. Enda Delaney argues Irish migration has been caused by many different factors, not merely economic ones, and argues emigration to Britain was qualitatively different than to other countries but argues more research is required to establish how Irish immigrants were received in wartime Britain (Delaney, 2000, p.139). Mary Daly has argued that the Irish government wanted to continue to use migration to Britain as a safety valve against high unemployment in Eire but insisted on governmental oversight and a preference that migrants move to Britain due to considerable ill feeling in NI against them (Daly, 2006, p. 147). The Irish government also supported Catholic Church agencies operating in Britain to ensure migrants spiritual welfare, acted to prevent conscription of Irish citizens, and provided assurances of the character migrants to the British Police, all implying that the Irish Government considered the possibility of harmful and prejudicial attitudes to be of some danger to its citizens.

Unfortunately, official histories of the management of Labour (Parker, 1957), and the munitions industries (Inman, 1957), concentrated on government efforts at the best utilisation of available resources, rather than the social effects of such an influx. Though Inman notes difficulty finding billets for immigrant Irish workers (Inman, 1957, p. 160), and that though the numbers of Irish workers in the munitions industry was low, roughly thirty thousand out of a total of two million, they were ‘valuable to the Ministry of Supply production out of all proportion to its numbers’ (Inman, 1957, p. 174). Both Inman and Parker commodify Irish labour and are only tangentially concerned with public perceptions. Others have referred to discrimination against women, and older Irish women in particular, in WW2 machine-tool industries and shipyards (Summerfield, 2013, p. 58), and Delaney (Delaney, 1999), Holmes and Croucher (Croucher, 1982) cite ‘the usual complaints’ (Delaney, 2000, p. 139) of drunken and disorderly behaviour, general distrust and hostility, lack of assimilation and a particular prejudice against Irish women, who were deemed particularly resistant to work discipline (Croucher, 1982, pp. 256,281). These

'usual complaints' echo Victorian prejudices, but the addition of Irish people taking the jobs of British men compelled into the armed forces is a new wartime slant on the perception that Irish workers represented a threat to wages and competition for jobs. Delaney and Lunn argue that any prejudice that did occur had little effect because British people understood that Irish help was necessary, and confrontation would be disruptive in a time of great uncertainty. Delaney further argues that despite there being only little overt prejudice, this was fuelled by Irish neutrality, but should also be considered within the wider context of society in war (Delaney, 1999), while Lunn has urged research in this subject to reveal if this 'hidden history', can be quantified, arguing this subject produces the dilemma of never knowing whether what 'evidence that is uncovered is merely the tip of the iceberg or its entirety' (Lunn, 1993, p. 107). Though prejudice may be an expected, if not justified, constituent of war, and although it may not have been overt, it was nonetheless insidious and influential.

The large number of Irish immigrant workers in Britain was widely known but officially unacknowledged for fear that recruiting programmes could be considered a breach of neutrality (Lunn, 1993, p. 102), which would have ended a much-needed labour supply. Thus, it was to Britain's advantage to downplay the contribution and story of Irish immigrant workers during the war. This furtiveness continued post-war and is reflected by a preface to a specially commissioned 1948 report, *Irish Labour in Great Britain, 1939-1945*, which warns that no use should be made of its contents 'without first consulting the Manpower section' (*TNA, LAB 8/152*). The report itself illuminates the burdensome bureaucratic and diplomatic exigencies the British government were forced to tolerate, and which operated alongside significant fears of possible espionage and sabotage but concludes that Irish labour fulfilled distinct purpose and helped correct a distinct insufficiency in manpower. Chapter five aims to assess the depth of prejudice felt against Irish immigrant workers, and the reasons for any antipathy and how this affected industrial and diplomatic relations.

Chapter six will look at contemporary perceptions of Irish volunteers in the British Forces. There has recently been an upsurge in academic interest in Irish volunteers in this subject, yet

these have not concentrated on contemporary sources or gauged British public opinion of their contribution. Yvonne McEwen noted in 2004 the comparative disinterest of historians in establishing the precise number of Irish volunteers in the British forces (McEwen, 2004, p. 82), but by looking at recorded deaths in the British Army has extrapolated a reliable figure for Irish volunteers who served (McEwen, 2004, p. 83). Jenkins has recorded many reasons why Irish men and women volunteered for the British Forces and notes 'the existence of a strong national identity that superseded the British uniform' (Jenkins, 2012, p. 430), and Myles Dungan insists the large number of Irish men joining the British Army should not be seen as an indictment on Neutrality, pointing out that those who disagreed with neutrality were not stopped from joining the British Forces (Dungan, 1993, p. 145). The popular histories of Richard Doherty record the experiences of Irish men and women in the World War Two British armed forces (Doherty, 1993, 1999, 2004, 2010), but the military focus of these books mostly precludes any discussion perceptions of these volunteers. Indeed, the foreword to Doherty's *Ireland's Generals in the Second World War*, by Major-General The O'Morchoe, praises Doherty's decision to leave issues of Irish identity for another book in the future (Doherty, 2004, p. 11). However, these books include intermittent anecdotes describing occurrences where Irishness was problematic, and these have served as partial inspiration for some of the research in this thesis.

Until the work of Steven O'Connor, there had been little research on Irish identity or stereotyping in the British Forces in World War Two. O'Connor emphasises that the British Forces of the era were multinational, multi-ethnic and multi-faith, encompassing persons from the dominions and empire alongside volunteers from the exiled and defeated governments from across Europe, 'therefore, an understanding of identity and integration…. (was) essential to any assessment of its military effectiveness' (O'Connor, 2015, p. 419). Citing examples of Army accommodation of Catholic soldiers' religious duties, the formation of an Irish Brigade in 1942 and the unofficial changing of short-leave regulations to allow Irish soldiers home leave (O'Connor, 2015, pp. 422-423), O'Connor argues that there was no structural, institutionalized anti-Irish bigotry in Army procedure, but there were occasions of prejudicial attitudes, often at

the point of ill-discipline or potential trouble. This indicates the existence of underlying prejudice, and the acceptance of stereotypes which the strictures of military discipline which the power of comradeship could not totally preclude. Additionally, O'Connor relies somewhat on oral testimony, which, he acknowledges, has its limitations, but argues other contemporary military records reinforce this conclusion (O'Connor, 2014, p. 114). The restriction of his work to Irish officers is problematic in that many Irish officers came from the Protestant landed classes and were thus of a group less targeted by prejudice. He argues that Army training instilled regimental identity yet still allowed for retention of national identity and pride. If this were the case other soldiers may equally have been said to retain previously formed prejudices, but this possibility is unexplored. Additionally, Cormac Kavanagh analyses the skilful diplomatic and governmental handling, by Ireland and Britain, between the concept of Irish neutrality and its pragmatic application regarding Irish citizens in the British Armed Forces (Kavanagh, 2000). He concludes that with unprecedented co-operation between Britain and the Free State, both governments were committed to preserving the appearance of strict and unyielding neutrality (Kavanagh, 2000, p. 80). This thesis will assess public perceptions of those who volunteered for the British Forces, and how the British made sense of the apparent contradiction of soldiers of a neutral nation, one that had just violently seceded from the Union, in the Forces of the United Kingdom, assess how these volunteers were affected by stereotypes, with their motivations and actions being explained by being part of a 'martial race', by being loyal to the British connection, being anti-neutral or anti-de Valera, and persistently, paradoxical. Chapter six will illuminate how British soldiers felt about their Irish comrades and how the Army felt about their Irish volunteers, alongside the views of those who supported the cause of the volunteers.

Eunan O'Halpin has written extensively, and persuasively, on Anglo-Irish intelligence co-operation in this period, and acknowledges that various British intelligence agencies reacted somewhat mercurially to the threat of Nazi espionage in Eire, being torn 'between two contrasting assumptions: that of Irish co-operation, and that of Irish hostility' (O'Halpin, 1999, p. 173). McMahon similarly argues dualistic attitudes in the British Intelligence communities which

required the goodwill of the Irish state in preventing Ireland being used as a base to attack Britain, while the perceived need for the use of the Irish treaty ports necessitated pressure on the Irish government (McMahon, 2008, p. 284). Christopher Andrew argues that this situation led to British agents being 'in the position of searching in the dark for something that did not exist' (Andrew, 1986, pp. 155-156), with wild and often mischievous rumour often taken at face value, especially during the phoney war period (O'Halpin, 2003, pp. 51-52). McMahon also argues that to the assumption of Irish hostility was added the effect of Blitzkrieg in the West, where, searching for explanation of its success, British intelligence concluded that fifth columns had been instrumental in German conquest and that this pattern would be followed in the future. It not until 1942 was the Abwehr's capability, or rather lack thereof [2], was understood and the threat in both countries was put into perspective (McMahon, 2008, p. 393). Not only do these intelligence services assumptions display an element of scepticism, one that is the raison d'etre of intelligence, but also assumption of Irish perfidy despite evidence to the contrary.

In reality, as O'Halpin points out, the menace to British safety that Eire represented was offset by valuable intelligence co-operation which allowed for the British Forces in Northern Ireland to jointly plan with their Southern counterparts to plan the defence of Ireland in the event of German invasion (O'Halpin, 2003, pp. 53-54). Yet the discovery of 'Plan Kathleen', not a military blueprint but rather a list of questions to be considered before a plan was created, 'raised grave questions about German intentions' (O'Halpin, 2003, p. 244). As Eunan O'Halpin has shown, G2 had been monitoring the activities of pro-German organisations since early 1938, even before MI5 had any knowledge the Fichte Bund in Eire (O'Halpin, 2003, pp. 41-42), but also argues 'that there were gaps in Anglo-Irish security sharing' in the early war years, before the mechanics of the Intelligence collaboration had been settled[3] (O'Halpin, 2003, p. 6). But these

[2] By 1944 it was clear that, as in Britain, German Intelligence agents in Eire, their numbers, their efforts, their training, and equipment, were greatly overestimated and the execution of their purposes woefully inept. In April, Guy Liddell noted Radio sets dropped in Ireland 'were of a very high grade' but their voltage and crystals were incorrect for use in Britain or Eire (West, 2005a, p. 185). In the face of such ineptitude, it is hard to objectively understand how British Intelligence captured all German Spies in Britain (Masterman, 1973) and yet considered it impossible for the Irish Intelligence services to do the same.

[3] American Intelligence did not share its knowledge with Eire and guarded the ULTRA codes 'jealously' (O'Halpin, 2003, p. 6).

mechanics were settled early on, though some intelligence agencies were sceptical, notably those associated with the admiralty. However, Cecil Liddell, MI5 officer with responsibility for Ireland, was so happy with Anglo-Irish intelligence cooperation that by early 1940 he urged admiralty intelligence to direct all their questions to Col. Archer at G2 in Eire for his input (West, 2005b, p. 37). By 1942 MI5 had become so comfortable in its relationship with G2 that it allowed a suspected spy to visit Ireland after capture (West, 2005a, p. 46)[4]. In general, the British intelligence agencies were forced to rely on Irish aid but did not totally dispel doubts at its reliability. Only after the war did British Intelligences conclude that in Eire 'Everything humanly possible was done to take steps to ensure that Eire should not be a base of for the operations of enemy secret agents against this country and to safeguard vital allied operations' (Petrie, quoted in O'Halpin, 2003, p. 15).

British popular opinion was unknowing of intelligence cooperation and was fixated on the continuing presence of the German Legation in Dublin. It was well known that it had a radio transmitter but disbelieved that though messages from Germany are of almost daily occurrence, messages to Germany are only very occasional' (West, 2005a, p. 228). These were also monitored and shared with MI5. This disbelief reached a high point at the 'American Note' crisis of 1944, which was designed to goad Eire into an official refusal to close the Axis legations as the Allies prepared to liberate Europe. Refusal to remove the legations resulted in the Notes validation, as Roy Foster argues, of the 'Conception that neutral Ireland was a viperous nest of German agents (which) outlived the second world war – German spies in Ireland· entered the folklore' (Foster, 1988, p. 560). Chapter seven will elucidate how the myth of spies in Eire came to be and the extent to which it was believed for years afterward, and especially how British popular feeling towards Eire became entrenched at the end of the war.

[4] Joseph Lenihan had been apprehended after being sent to Ireland by Nazi Intelligence after his capture in the Channel Islands. He had offered to become part of the 'Double Cross' scheme but was deemed too unreliable. He was considered, like several other captured spies, to have used the Abwehr only to gain free and safe passage back to Ireland.

1.7 SOURCES

While recognising that perceptions, attitudes, and popular memory are not easy to conceptualize, determine or measure, this thesis will rely on the use of contemporary sources which indicate subjective opinion which, using Foucault's concept of 'popular memory, would contribute to a British popular memory of Eire's war, alongside the similar formation of memory of the British war. To mitigate the effects of time in the distortion of popular memory, only contemporary sources are used in this thesis.

1.7.1 Hindsight

Historians mining a rich vein of oral history have uncovered stories of some of the Irish people in Britain who experienced this period, but these often do not reflect the tone of contemporary evidence. Works anthologising this experience by O'Grady (O'Grady, 1988), Lennon et al (Lennon, McAdam, & O'Brien, 1988) and Mary Muldowney (Muldowney, 2007) concentrate more on the effects of dislocation in the emigrant experience or tend to only mention examples of discrimination with distaste, on which they do not wish to elaborate. The emigrant tends to evade these memories which are uncomfortable and do not conform to the story they are trying to tell; that is their own story rather than those of others. As Redmond has pointed out in oral histories there is a lack of emphasis on 'their awareness and views of public commentary on emigration issues' and notes the disconnect between remembered oral histories and contemporary evidence of public feeling (Redmond, 2018, p.7). The teller of the story may also see the events of the past through rose-tinted spectacles and, as result, there is a clear disconnect between contemporary feelings and reminiscence, and this thesis uses only contemporary sources to mitigate the effects of the passage of time.

Additionally, historical interpretations have often been coloured by hindsight. Brian Girvin (Girvin, 2006, p. 322) has argued that Ireland should have joined the conflict in 1942 when it was clear the time of possible invasion had passed. Irish government Minister Alan Shatter

controversially interpreted the Irish wartime stance as morally bankrupt (Moran, L, 2012) and at least one British historian has suggested Ireland should apologise for her actions (Ben MacIntyre, 2013), proving the continued relevance of the moral debate. Diarmaid Ferriter sees these opinions as being a simplification of extremely complex motivations and arguing that they derive from 'reading history backwards' and 'simplifying the past to satisfy present-day political sensibilities' (Diarmaid Ferriter, 2012). Such simplifications in effect, justify Ferriter's point. These arguments are based on conceptions of the war as being justified and fought, by the Allies, at least for the greater good, if not for democracy and freedom, conceptions which were not universally contemporaneously accepted.

Opinions holding that Eire was ignoring the war and standing aside from taking a moral stance can only have been strengthened as evidence of the Holocaust emerged, and World War Two continued to be cast as was the 'good war'. These events were, of course, in the future when the policy of neutrality was confirmed. Retrospectively, standing aside in such a war could easily be cast as immoral, and the 'cowardice' of neutrality neatly segues into common historical assertions of Irish 'cowardly' terroristic violence and an inability to see 'what was good for them'. Additionally, the secret assistance given to the allies, still not widely known today, adds weight to such assertions. However, even if the moral stance of neutrality is judged as complacent, Irish 'complacency' could have taken a worse form than a belief that this war was to be fought for the same reasons as the last. Hindsight that makes suggestions of immorality easier to argue.

To contain the influence of the mythology of the 'People's War', this thesis has used only contemporary sources, where the holder can only express his opinion as he saw it then. All sources, excepting a few on the post-war Irish government's attitudes towards Irish ex-servicemen in the British Forces, are confined between the beginning of the year 1939 and the end of 1945. Though some relevant autobiographies, memoirs, oral histories, and documents have been read in preparation for this work, these have generally only served to highlight the shortcomings of popular opinion, which is often subject to the filter of subsequent events. In these it is clear the writer has preferred to concentrate of the more positive aspects of their experience, and any less

positive experiences are almost invariably characterised as being no more than 'water under the bridge'. It is hoped that contemporary sources remain as close to what people living then may have felt, read, seen, or heard through the available contemporary public culture and discourse, rather than through post-war reconstructions of their experiences or a sense of nostalgia. These sources are unchanged by a knowledge of the future, of how things 'turned out in the end', and do not represent any amalgam of opinions or post-war consensus arrived at with the addition of hindsight. In contemporary opinion we are also much more likely to find perceptions which relate to individual hopes and fears, paranoias, and assumptions, as well as considered opinions and ill-informed judgements, which show a broader truth than opinions sanitised by time. Contemporary opinion is also more likely to show the effect of attitudes in the raw. While my own experience of the 'People's War' mythology is informed by countless media reconstructions, and by the reminiscence of my parents and family members who lived through the period in question, I have tried to remain an objective interpreter of the evidence.

These contemporary sources reveal a different perspective in comparison to the remembered histories used by many researchers which often display a sense of acceptance of British disdain, caused either by ancient prejudices or by Irish neutrality, as either to be expected or no more than a minor inconvenience in their context, that it was better not remember. A memoir of some of the London Irish elders of 1991 recounts memories of prejudice in gaining work and accommodation for some yet also acceptance, alongside feelings that they were lucky to 'get a living' in Britain and concentrating on being 'young and enjoying themselves' (Schweitzer, 1991, pp. 35,38,71,97,131,137). Mary Muldowney's oral history does not include insights into how Irish women felt themselves perceived by British people (Muldowney, 2007), and Lennon, McAdam and O'Brien's collection only mentions two incidents of positive welcome and aid from British people (Lennon et al., 1988, pp. 53,173). Though attitudes were not the focus of these books the latter recounts one emigrant acknowledging that worse was to come as the 'Troubles' in NI exploded, perhaps explaining why many felt the poor attitudes of wartime less dangerous if not less offensive (Lennon et al., 1988, p. 175). It seems that, as Delaney has argued, based on

oral available testimonies, Irish migrants in general were not subject to 'overt hostility' (Delaney, 2000, p. 145). However, perceptions and attitudes are not always overt, and can underpin decisions made on a prejudicial basis, or where anger or ignorance frustrates reason. On this basis perceptions and attitudes do not need to be felt by Irish people to be hostile, and the expression of perceptions is evidence of their existence and power to be more believable than fact or even possibility. On this basis contemporary sources bring emotive and subjective issues into focus and reflect the perceptions as they were rather than what they were to become after timely reflection.

Contemporary sources require patience to find because Eire's role in the war was small and her non-involvement raised less pressing urgency than that of most other powers in Europe. However, the volubility, animus, repugnance, and accusations of stupidity that characterised these opinions make them stand-out. Public opinion was often grotesquely offensive in its dismissiveness and disdain for Irish sensibility. The effect of this undoubtedly made it less likely that Irish people in Britain would advertise their nationality or experience, so the voices of these are conspicuous by their absence. The reflections of Irish people on how they were perceived are limited to few protestations of Eire governmental policy and denouncements of IRA activity in the public sphere, whereas private communications reveal, through postal and telephone censorship reports, that they predominantly supported Irish policy. By contrast many British opinions appear to be regulated only by reluctance to utter, and record, profanities.

Such contemporary opinion can only be recorded and assessed, with any hope of accuracy, by strict design. Luckily in the period in question the British government was keen to assess public attitudes and how these might affect morale. Two major sources used here, Mass Observation and Home Intelligence, often measure direct subjective arguments connected with how the war was being interpreted and were used to suggest how these could be used to manipulate civilian morale. Specifically, they recorded attitudes and feelings that might affect behaviour. These sources were designed to gauge public attitudes where many others are only tangentially interested in subjectivity. Where opinions are widely held and repeated it is more

likely that these may have contributed to, or distorted 'popular memory', and those that do not fit developing narratives, are more likely to be ejected as false or unfounded. However, it is still important to note that each source type has its own disadvantages as well as utility.

1.7.2 Mass Observation

Mass Observation (MO) has been interpreted variously as a social movement used by its volunteers to better understand current events and become 'of some use in the fight against Fascism' (Summerfield, 1985, p. 442) and as a movement recognising the need for political change (Calder, 1985, p. 130). Lucy Noakes argues that 'the dominant public picture of the nation at war, an image of the nation bonded together by its experiences, is also present in the responses of the MO panellists' (Noakes, 1998, pp. 85,97). Searching for attitudes about Ireland and the war in a repository of information with the objective of 'nothing less than to achieve a complete understanding of modern society, neglecting nothing as unimportant' (Calder, 1985, p. 124), should elicit a picture of changing public opinion on a former constituent part of the UK. Additionally, because the initially politically independent body was co-opted by the MOI (ministry of Information) to become a means by which engagement of citizenship for the purposes of wartime morale, this means MO research on popular attitudes 'focused on whether (these opinions) represented a current or future threat to British Society and Politics' (Kushner, 2004, p. 139), as well as how people felt about the war and their changing society. As Ireland was considered strategically vital, obstinately obstructive and a less defended 'backdoor' to Britain at various points during the war, MO could be expected to evidence popular attitudes on Eire. Indeed, MO once offered its services in interpreting Irish public opinion before any potential 'forcing assistance upon Ireland' for her own defence (*MO File Report 225 - Immediate International Uses of Mass-Observation*, 1/6/1940), proving that even 'objective' report writers could not resist some subjectivity.

However, that is not to say that, as a historical source, MO does not have its drawbacks. During the war MO suffered from a lack of overall co-ordination and policy, and active hostility

from various quarters. Members of government were often unwilling to accept morale reports as indicative of actual public opinion (McLaine, 1979, p.52), whilst the furtive collection of opinion by non-governmental agencies predisposed many to accept the newspapers characterization of observers as 'Coopers Snoopers' (Summerfield, 1985, pp. 446-447). Due to such controversy, the perceived importance of its work fluctuated wildly, but its survival throughout the entire war years, and the combination of war-specific reports, general questionnaires and personal diaries makes MO a unique historical source, providing a wealth of detail within a huge number and a wide range of responses. Due to digitisation the scale and catholicity of information is a less daunting hurdle, but methodological problems remain, especially a lack of qualitative distinction between publicly expressed opinion and private conviction. Though MO recognised this (Madge & Harrisson, 1937, p. 29), and prioritised private opinion to evaluate public morale, the charge remains that the subjectivity of the observer may be injected into reports. File reports may have paraphrased responses or misinterpreted or ignored the tone of the response and can only truly reflect what is heard rather than what is said. Additionally, one of the founders of MO, Tom Harrisson displayed his own shortcomings when writing of Ulster's 'Chronic Christianity', notably asserting 'The Irish took to Christianity with record speed, and are certainly still the most religious English-speaking, - *if not "civilised",* - people on our earth' (*MO File Report 2101 - Ulster Outlooks*, 1944). Such subjectivity, of course, often betrays attitudes in the writer, as well as the subject, and it is this that makes MO a vital source for the purposes of this thesis.

Mark Abrams has gone so far as to argue that MO's 'methods are inchoate and uncontrolled' and 'contributed nothing that can be called a scientific method of content analysis' (Abrams, 1951, p. 112), and indeed the use of sometimes untrained observers, and the inability of the project to deliver a finished product, an actual 'science of ourselves' (Madge & Harrisson, 1939, p. 9), suggests that MO was a heroic failure. Yet, the snapshot technique often used was subverted by respondents to give a freer range of expression, and volunteer diarists gave opinions unfettered by pre-set questions or topics of disinterest to the writer. It also provided an unusually broad spectrum of contributors for the time. Indeed, MO diaries were often the only important

space for expression for female, working class, less educated and unknown writers, expressing the conscious and unconscious thought, and giving insight into *why* people thought as they did. However, the self-selection of contributors, most often, though not exclusively, male, educated and middle-class (Calder, 1985, p. 132; Summerfield, 1985, pp. 441-442), has led to suggestion that the 'project was shot through with an intentionality informed by particular class and gender assumptions' (Gurney, 1997, p. 259). However, as Penny Summerfield has noted, this does not always produce banal narrative (Summerfield, 1985, p. 442), and Angus Calder sees contributors as 'commonly active, sociable people, and …cranks were, if anything, under-represented', Tony Kushner sees the diaries scope as 'testimony to their richness and complexity, not their failure' (Kushner, 2004, p. 239). Most importantly the combination of MO fieldwork, directives, diaries, and file reports creates an archive of invaluable first-hand accounts and opinions, where otherwise the focus of historians would have limited only to the study of the political and military elites. For this writer MO provides a mine of opinions and reflections unparalleled in its scope and depth, which represents a window into the lives of the literate classes of the British population, who appreciated MO and wartime objectives, and felt they had a contribution to make.

1.7.3 Home Intelligence

Home Intelligence reports were created by the Wartime Social Survey unit working alongside MO, under governmental control but with a far more defined remit, being concerned only in interpreting public perceptions related to the War and its effects on society for the MOI. The aim of this intelligence was to help 'assess morale generally, discover how people reacted and adapted to bombings, and to bring to the relevant government departments shortcomings in their relief services' (McLaine, 1979, p. 109). Initially issuing daily reports on morale from spring 1940, HI reports were issued weekly from October, when it became clear that there was no immediate danger of a collapse in public morale. HI reports are a series of 'invariably impressionistic' (Addison & Crang, 2010, p. xvi) syntheses of what the HI observers heard, read, or discussed concerning the war in everyday life, including people's concerns, fears, attitudes,

and opinions on all matters related to themselves and the wider events around them. Constructed as they were, HI reports were best placed to report contemporary attitudes, whether well informed, reactive to events, idiosyncratic or based on barely credible rumour. The importance of morale for the purposes of government was weekly stressed by a prefacing weekly note reminding readers of the confidential nature of the reports, and explaining it was not a report of fact but a 'reflection of the public's views and feelings about the war in general' (*TNA, INF 1/292*), to be used for purposes of planning and mitigation where necessary.

HI reports were aggregated by three MOI Regional Officers in thirteen regional units who collected impressions from a sample of a minimum of 30 contacts per officer, each week. Each officer rotated between two to three hundred regular contacts to avoid asking the same people repeatedly. Opinions gathered were cross-checked to remove opinions not widely held at regional level, and reports are again cross-checked, amalgamated, and re-checked at national level before issue. The unit officers were given short training stressing the essential need for objectivity, with the aim of becoming 'impartial recording and assessing machines' (*TNA, INF 1/282*). Each officer built a panel of voluntary contacts of which each contact must be known to the officer 'as a sensible, level-headed person' to whom the object of the work was to be 'adequately explained' to engage their sympathy with the projects aims. The contacts were suggested as 'doctors, parsons, shopkeepers, trade union officials, bank managers, …. businessmen, local journalists, factory managers, newsagents, licensed victuallers, librarians etc.' (*TNA, INF 1/282*). Hardly rigorous in social scientific terms these reports nonetheless represented genuine attempt to gauge public opinion by synthesising the best available sources, one with an impressive range and quantity, and deemed 'unlikely to be very far from the truth' (Mackay, 2013, p. 10). Though the collection process was designed to be impartial, it was also reliant on what observers judged a 'sensible, level-headed person', a definition open to wide interpretation. It was clear that assumptions and opinions would not be totally excluded from the preparation of the reports, and it was clear that the contributors used were unrepresentative of some social classes. Unlike MO contributors, who were often self-selected, the HI officer's panel was selected by officers who were themselves

most likely to be well educated and middle-class likely to be from the same background. Though the panellists collected 'what people said about the war', they themselves may not have been as objective as it was hoped.

Even at the beginning subjectivity is plain in a report explaining to users 'How the Weekly Report is made' (*TNA, INF 1/282*). This assumes and excuses the British publics supposed reluctance to voice praise or satisfaction, arguing it was to be expected that comment would most often be critical. Yet the writer attempts to assure readers that, despite the risk that 'in the process of converting ill-formulated ideas (of the public) into words, distortion may sometimes occur', each point in the report 'represents more than any one individual is likely to be thinking or feeling' (*TNA, INF 1/282*). Such assumptions often led to denial of the values of the information gathered, with notable opposition from the press, who ran a campaign suggesting that the 'silent column' of Home Intelligence officers were behind an increase in convictions for 'spreading alarm and despondency' and defeatist talk (Addison & Crang, 2010, p. xv). Undoubtedly newspapers felt their own journalistic methods were the best way to discern public opinion, as did government departments and MP's, who felt and public requests of MP's were more reliable evidence of public concerns. These doubts never really disappeared as by 1944 a circular to those who received the report, asking about its usefulness, reveals that by then they were felt repetitive, too long, not directed towards the specific departments who received it and hardly essential. However, some felt it the only comprehensive view on the state of public opinion available to policy makers (*TNA, INF 1/285*), and its reports have been invaluable to as such to historians of the Home Front.

However, the range of opinion is larger than found in MO. Opinions are more mixed and portray the effect of rumour more strongly than MO reports, with the occasional rumour at the extremes of possibility, which suggests both a wider range of respondents and a set of responses less mediated by the subjectivity of the collector. Information was also gathered from questionnaires, BBC Listener Research, postal censorship, and Local committees. HI recognised the limitations of local information committees, noting that the effect of speaking in a group mediated many responses, and prioritised these responses below those of the officers collecting

from panels. Postal censorship reports were, for them, even less valuable, having been written by predominantly Irish immigrants, and 'these writers are not necessarily representative of the British working classes. For HI, the Irish contained 'an unduly high proportion of lower-class writers' and because of their affinity's questions like that 'of the Irish ports continued to be an important topic in postal censorship long after it ceased to be of interest to the average Englishman' (*TNA, INF 1/282*). The perceptions of Irish immigrants were thus deemed immaterial to the study, despite what their experience of British people's opinions might have been. This not only shows a dismissiveness on grounds of nationality, but also perceived class and educational achievement. It also most succinctly and directly shows that the writer, and by extension the opinions he collects, feels Irish opinion of the British completely irrelevant. Though there was still a lower level, continuing resentment of Irish behaviour between the heights of anti-Irish feeling[5], by 1942 HI reports became redolent of their writers boredom where the reports 'Eire' column became repetitive, hackneyed, and trite, before the column became routinely empty. Evidently Ireland was of no concern and opinions had developed into truisms for even those reporting on public concerns. However, HI reports were seen as valuable in other areas.

HI reports were evidently valued according to their achievement of what was expected of them by each recipient. A justificatory circular from the MOI notes that 'Perhaps the most convincing evidence of the validity of the report is the high degree of agreement which is usually found between the thirteen different regional intelligence reports' used to make up the main report (*TNA, INF 1/282*). Indeed, the main lesson taken from HI reports was that pre-war assumptions that a breakdown in morale would lead to mass panic and riot were proved unfounded (M. Smith, 2000, p. 71), and HI reports generally confirmed that the state of public morale was less affected by the short-term shock of air-raids, but more by longer-term issues, which enabled people to get

[5] There is some evidence of a temporary heightening of anxiety about Eire around the time of the Dieppe raid in August 1942. This is especially prevalent in HI where the occurrence of public rumour is easier to ascertain. Here there is said to be anxiety that 'careless talk' cost lives and continued fear of information leakage is shown to rise before resurfacing in 1944 as proof of espionage in the Dublin legation.

on with their lives. They also evidence a strong belief in final victory, the growing importance of the Home Front to that victory, pressure for a more efficient prosecution of the war and a strong growth in national identity, and a suspicion of those who did not share their view of the war (Addison & Crang, 2010, p. xvii). For the purposes of this research, they provide a wide-ranging insight into how the British middle class reacted to the war contemporaneously, and without the historical perspective of today.

1.7.4 Newspapers

Newspapers and periodicals have had a long and rarely positive association with the subject of Ireland. Curtis (Curtis, 1968, 1971), de Nie (de Nie, 2004), and Lebow (Lebow,1976) have written extensively on Victorian media representations of the Irish, noting the influence of Social Darwinism and pseudo-sciences on public perceptions. These works note Victorian newspapers and magazines both influencing and reflecting public opinion as the only contemporary news media available. The portrayal of the 'Irish character' they often assumed was influenced by well-established theatre and popular entertainment 'stock characters' prevalent from the time of the Restoration. Hayton does rightfully point out that such stereotyping via stock characters and 'bulls' was not only applied to the Irish (Hayton, 1988), but their influence on perceptions is clear. For such portrayals to be accepted they must be familiar and anticipated by the audience, and thus reflect the political and social factors affecting the object and the audience. Newspapers, similarly, being in the business of making money, fail when representing that which is alien to their readership, and it is this mechanic that makes newspapers a good measure of opinion.

In 1938 MO concluded that 35% of those interviewed relied on newspapers for information on which to base their opinion. The same poll revealed that information from friends was second at 17% and Radio third at 13% (Madge & Harrisson, 1939, p. 30), clearly emphasising the scale of newspapers influence on public opinion. Many newspapers were still using embedded cultural

shorthand during World War Two to simplify complex information and motivations to their readers, and, even outside of wartime, newspapers sources cannot be regarded as impartial. Though the British wartime press was not censored it was still controlled by mutual agreement that censorship would be imposed if the newspapers did not regulate themselves. Information obviously of use to the enemy was suppressed but opinion that endangered relations with other countries had to be treated with caution. Even the Ministry of Information struggled with defining what was the truth and what truth should be told, initially suggesting a policy of limited truth-telling if it was justified, on the basis that 'It is simpler to tell the truth, and, if a sufficient emergency arises, to tell one big, thumping lie that will then be believed' (*TNA, HO 199/434*). Later realising that the public could, in general handle harsh truths (M. Smith, 2000, p. 71) newspapers were allowed by the MOI to effectively control themselves, though the government retained the policy that the Press 'must either be humoured or completely quashed' (17/7/1940, *TNA, PREM 4/66/2*). This policy did not curb all excesses relating to opinions on Eire. Additionally, the newspapers, unknowing of the extent of intelligence cooperation with Eire, could not be too tightly controlled on their opinions of the Irish because this control could be interpreted as a sign that collaboration was occurring, which would be an abrogation of neutrality. To this extent it was harder to regulate newspaper opinion about Ireland than on opinion expressed on almost any other subject. Press impartiality was a near impossibility when discussing Eire.

However, it should be conceded that there are no documentary sources that can be considered totally impartial; no documents are free of distortion of some kind for they are inevitably produced with a purpose in mind. So, newspapers selectively describe and interpret an event for the reader, and because of this interpretation are a valuable source. However, to use sources more closely displaying a strand of public opinion, this thesis uses only public letters to the editor, opinion pieces and editorials; news reports are intentionally side-lined, unless they spark opinions found in other sources. These sources are representative of newspaper readers, and of course each newspaper type has its own class of readership. Notwithstanding, it is possible to gauge the audience some newspapers aim for, because all have a market in mind and write for

that part of the market. Typically, National broadsheets, such as *The Times, The Telegraph, The Scotsman,* and others, aimed at a middle to upper class market, were less likely to express derogatory opinions, and were often understanding of Irish motivations, but rarely argued that Irish actions were correct. Letters to the editor were usually from MP's, ex-politicians, academics, or ex-military officers with experience of the issues at question or of Ireland, offering differing interpretations the issues. Circulation for these, in 1939, was under 800,000 sales, making them influential in only the most politically informed classes. National middle brow papers such as the *Daily Mail, Daily Express* and *News Chronicle* were aimed at a middle- class audience, with more simplified copy and an emphasis on support of public morale and British war aims. With circulation in the in the low millions, less detailed, less nuanced, more simply written stories, and opinions both reflected and influenced public opinion for their readers. Tabloids such as *The Daily Herald, The Daily Mirror*, and *The Daily Record*, were image and opinion led interpreting the news plainly for the reader. With circulation in the low millions these were massively influential among the working classes, and often reflect some of the more strident views found in the HI and MO sources. Regional Papers, generally with a circulation up to 50,000, were generally middle brow and often used syndicated articles and columns but added locally important slants on their stories. Indeed, letters to the editor are often unrepresentative of the newspaper readers as only a minority, able and willing to share their opinions. However, letters and editorials preserve a discourse of the time and an insight into what was of concern to a section of the public, including how they interpreted current events.

1.8 CONCLUSION

The experience of Anglo-Irish relations in World War Two may be best summed up by Dermot Keogh; 'A Modus Vivendi had been worked out between the Allies and de Valera. That was not sufficient to overcome the sense that British and American sailors had died unnecessarily in the Atlantic war owing to the fact that the Irish ports were not open to the Allies….' (Keogh, 1994, p. 156). However, how this 'sense' emerged, how this is related to a long history of

antipathy between the nations and how this problem is still a bone of contention today, needs careful exploration, and placing in historical context. Anne O'Grady cites her interviews of Irish World War Two immigrants who believed their treatment in official capacity was good, and that pay, and conditions were fair, but also that they were sometimes challenged over their state's neutrality (O'Grady, 1988, p. 11). These interviews were conducted in the 1980's and indicate an amount of hindsight and distance from the raw emotions felt at the time.

Previously some works have uncovered British opinions and perceptions on the Irish in studies focussed on other aspects of this period, such as demography, economy and ergonomics, social history, the general experience and motivation of immigrants, the British Home Front, diplomacy, and politics, but there has been no study specifically designed to assess and analyse the depth, scope, volume, dimensions, and bias of contemporary opinion. It has been argued that such attitudes can be difficult to discern. Kenneth Lunn suggests that standard social histories tend to emphasise the integrative effects of working together in the war effort and ignore evidence to the contrary (Lunn, 1993, p. 106), and as Enda Delaney notes 'the problem of interpreting isolated outward manifestations of prejudice or hostility as indicative of a widespread attitude is obvious' (Delaney, 2000, p. 139). Yet despite the difficulties of discovering such a 'hidden history', one can establish some indication of the attitude of those concerned by comparing the predominance of reported negative, ill-informed, or prejudicial attitudes to those that were positive, accepting or understanding. As sources such as MO and HI were designed to elicit popular opinion, as far as was possible, and notwithstanding methodological and interpretational problems, represent the best available sources to find popular opinion held outside the classes which make history and diplomacy. Ministerial and governmental files held at the National Archives also elicit a mine of attitudes, perceptions, and prejudices about Ireland, not least because of British frustration at the obstinacy and obtuse character of de Valera, which often led to similar feelings amongst his political allies[6]. Newspaper sources not only reflect the views of

[6] See McCullagh's two-part biography (2017-19) which elucidates the frustrations of being de Valera's friend *or* foe.

correspondents but also reflect, and create, changing opinion as it occurs, within contemporary context, and without historical re-interpretation. Surveying wide scope of contemporary media and official records, specifically mining these contemporary sources for subjective attitudes and perceptions will elucidate, using the best possible resources, how British people related to Ireland and the Irish, beginning to finally acknowledge the cultural differences between Ireland and Britain, how British and Irish identities grew, changed and diverged, and if this meant that Ireland was considered, in effect, an enemy rather than a neutral, or a friend.

There is room in the literature to explore conditional acceptance, and toleration, at one less remove by studying contemporary sources and specifically seeking examples of opinion, subjectivity, and perception. This study will show the raw feelings of people unaffected by the type of sober reflection time can elicit, and is expected to expose evidence of anger, disillusionment, fear, and resentment, that does not appear in oral histories. Thus, this thesis is situated as a counterbalance to arguments based on non-contemporary sources, or on sources not designed, or indicative, of public opinion, and shows the course of the final acceptance in Britain that Ireland was culturally as well as politically divorced from the remaining nations of the UK. The differing reactions of these cultures to the upheaval of the Second World War, crystallised into a recognition that Ireland was cast as 'other' from the rest of the UK and was considered by many, who could only see binaries of opinion, as not with Britain but against her.

2 THE ENEMY WITHIN: THE IRA

2.1 INTRODUCTION

By the outbreak of the Second World War Britain already had much experience of violent Irish Nationalism. At this time represented by the IRA, 'physical force' Irish Nationalism had been popularly interpreted, in general, as nothing more than criminal, dismissing all political motivation. However, there had been no coordinated campaign in Britain since the 1922 Anglo-Irish Treaty had achieved Dominion status for the Irish Free State, contributing to a British belief that the 'Irish Question' had been limited to adjudication between the two Irish states. However, in 1939 the S-Plan, bombing returned the IRA to British soil in a campaign sabotage against the civil, economic, and military infrastructure. After issuing the British government with an ultimatum to remove British forces from the island of Ireland, the IRA campaign did not target civilians, but nevertheless on the 25th of August five people were killed and seventy injured by a bomb on a busy Coventry street. Smith has argued that the bombings did not produce panic but 'merely aroused anti-Irish feeling in Britain' (M. L. R. Smith, 1997, p. 63), however, despite the relatively slight economic impact and death toll, the cultural impact, at least in the short term, was extensive, with 'an IRA bomb incident in or around a major British city almost every other day in the first nine months of 1939' (Tony Craig Quoted in Evans, 2012). The campaign not only served to remind public opinion that the 'Irish Question' was still unsolved, but also convinced it that the Irish government either could not, or would not, effectively control the IRA. The violence combined with the prospect of imminent war also helped create an emotional environment where the combination of two enemies was deemed at least possible if not likely.

2.2 BOMBS BACKLASH

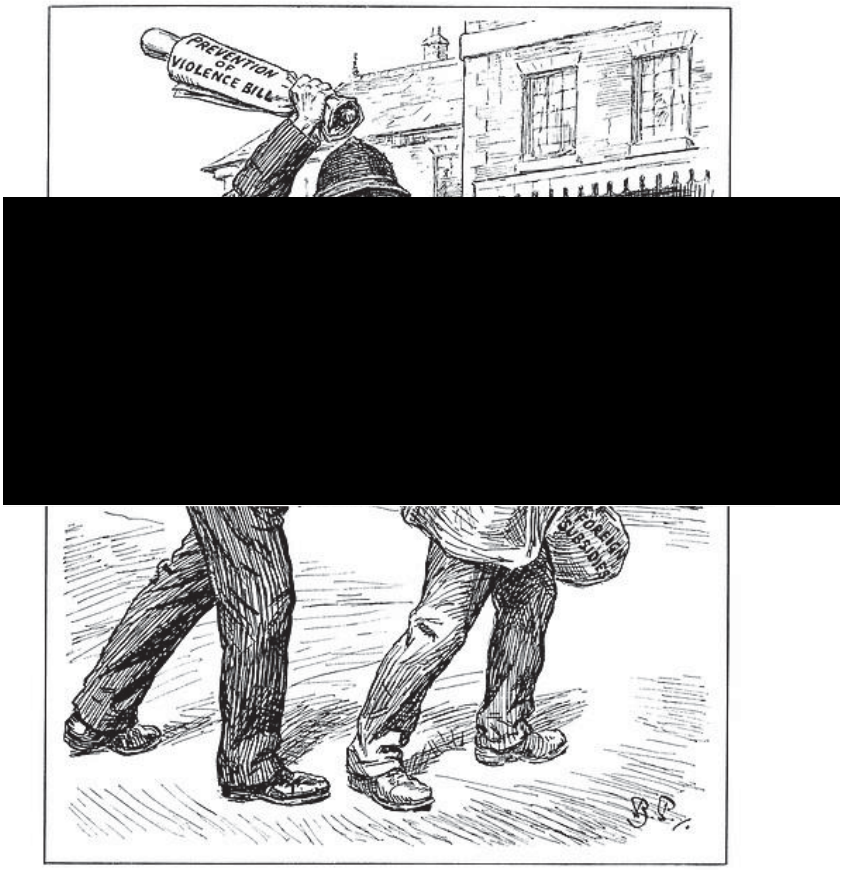
The S-Plan campaign should be seen in the context of the 1938 Anglo-Irish agreement, which returned the Treaty Ports to Irish sovereignty, settled the question of Land annuities, and

led to opinion that the IRA had little left of which to complain. The initially bloodless campaign elicited anger but also some attempts at conciliation, with some presenting de Valera as a force for peaceful change. A Lincolnshire MP was reported as suggesting that despite the recent campaign the people should continue to support the spirit of the 1938 agreement because de Valera 'has been a different man these last few years' willing to engage with the UK government and argued 'it is the wish of the majority of the Irish that the agreement should stand' (*Lincolnshire Echo*, 02/04/1939, p.4). Despite such optimism, and in the face of imminent war, most still suspected 'England's danger is once again Ireland's opportunity' (18/11/1939, *MO Diarist 5039.1*), and newspapers reported many incidents of anti-Irish feeling. The bombings were often violations of public space, especially the cinema explosions in Liverpool, London, and Birmingham, where local opinion held that 'It was well known the assailants were from Ireland' (Moran, 2010, p. 155). Irishness itself had become suspect in the Liverpool 'Case of the Mystery Irishman', where a man, described by police as 'obviously Irish', was searched and found to be carrying £12, considered a suspiciously high sum for someone 'of his means'. Claiming he was unfairly targeted he was eventually found innocent of any crime but refusing to give his name to a police officer (*Liverpool Echo*, 10-24/4/1939). Irish people were suspected of being terrorists on the flimsiest of precepts with one Irish man in Liverpool being beaten by a mob shouting 'he's IRA' and 'lynch the bastard' after lighting a match in a cinema. The incident, which could only be described as out of place in a smoke-filled auditorium due to the presence of an Irish accent, nevertheless resulted in the man being charged with public mischief by causing a panic (*Liverpool Echo*, 28/07/1939, p.12). Public reaction demanded severe repercussions even before the deaths caused in Coventry with letters to the press suggesting harsh sentences because 'there is nothing that that class of criminal dreads so much as the lash' (Aberdeen Press & Journal, 08/05/1939, p.13). A particularly venomous editorial suggested that 'Many consider that convicted bombing conspirators should be flogged and, in some cases, hanged for murder' adding that such men 'revive the old, suggested remedy for Irish grievances; tow Ireland out to Mid Atlantic, sink it for an hour…' and provide lifeboats for 'reasonable survivors' (*Cornishman and Cornish Telegraph*, 10/08/1939, p.5). Days before the Coventry bombing a *Daily Herald* article admitted a 'wave of

anti-Irish feeling in England' suggesting 'a lot of English people believe that Irish sympathy is with the IRA…(and) that Eire is in spirit an enemy country' yet argued that that this was not the case. The writer, a frequent visitor, and the papers diplomatic correspondent noted 'the great majority certainly do not approve the outrages' and was shocked to 'find that Irish men and women here are liable to find insult rather instead of friendliness' adding 'it makes me rather ashamed of my own people' (*Daily Herald*, 08/08/1939, p.5). However, public letters to the press invariably considered the IRA campaign as nothing more than a 'criminal and callous conspiracy' (*The Times*, 28/07/1939, p.15). A number agreed with the sentiment of a letter to *The Times* which argued the organization should not be termed an army because the campaign should not be 'dignified' by being accepted as a 'war' (*The Times*, 28/07/1939, p. 15). The governmental response to the campaign, the Prevention of Violence Act 1939, which for the first time in law provided for prevention of crime and exclusion from British soil to British citizens, did not prevent the deaths a month later in Coventry but effectively accepted that an implicit state of war with the IRA existed. The Act still posed, as *The Times* warned, a remote 'possibility of mistaken identity' which required 'the most scrupulous caution in avoiding it' (*The Times,* 20/07/1939, p.15), but such reservations did not impact on an ingrained cultural antipathy often openly expressed.

The Coventry bombing itself further heightened anger in 'many who knew little of Irish political problems and cared less' (Moran, 2010, p. 159). In Coventry 3,000 marching angry aircraft builders and anti-IRA protesters seized upon a bystander presumed to be Irish, only being pacified by a policeman assuring them that he 'was not an Irishman and had never been to Ireland' (Birmingham Gazette 29th August 1939 Quoted in Moran, 2010, p. 159). Moran also notes, at least in Birmingham, employers being prejudiced against applicants with Irish names, and that newspapers reported a man with an Irish accent 'almost lynched' when he attempted to buy a balloon for his landlady's child[7] (Moran, 2010, p. 158).

[7] Unfortunately, the IRA was known to have used balloons to contain explosives (Moran, 2010, p. 158).



THE ENEMY WITHIN THE GATES

Policeman Hoare: "I'm counted the kindest of men, but I mean to stop this!"

Figure 1: A Kindly Britain stops the IRA (Punch, 1939)

Strikes were threatened against the employment of Irish people in Coventry factories, and many left the city for a time, although some may have done so due to imminent war (Richardson & Harris, 1972, p. 97). Even before the Coventry bomb, Irish organisations in Britain quickly disassociated themselves from the violence emphasising their policy had been 'to try to make non-Irishmen conscious of the innate good that there is in the Irish race' (*Coventry Evening Telegraph,* 09/01/1939, p.7*)*. Two days after the bomb it was reported a proposal to form an 'Irish Union' that would consist of 'loyal Irish people', members being issued with a badge and certificate of membership, from which 'IRA members would be debarred by means best known to Irishmen themselves'. Raising the prospect of 'licensed Irishness', local papers appear to agree that any 'Irishman who refused to join this anti-IRA clan might have some explaining to do -

particularly after what occurred in Coventry last Friday' (*Coventry Evening Telegraph,* 30/08/1939, p.5). Letters to the Editor in the same edition stress local Irish peoples wish to disassociate themselves from 'the scum of that fair isle', 'a group of gun bullies and terrorists', yet feel apprehensive about being identified as Irish for fear of reprisal. Some admitted to being 'ashamed of being Irish' and that 'now the English people are classing all Irishmen alike', pleading with influential Irish locals to 'show that we are not connected with the IRA' (*Coventry Evening Telegraph,* 30/08/1939, p.5*)*. This initial reaction to the backlash was forceful enough to cause fear and distrust among the British and Irish communities in Britain but was quickly overshadowed by the declaration of war one week later. However, the damage to the Irish reputation had already been done; now Irishness became an indicator of IRA sympathies and the execution of those convicted of the Coventry bombing briefly brought fear of the IRA to a renewed higher level.

2.3 MO 1939 RACE SURVEY

Bombings, taken before the worst of the 1939 bombings, a survey by MO in June 1939 reflects a blurred distinction between the motivations of the IRA, the Irish people, and the Irish Government. An MO directive questionnaire on race included questions on the Irish, de Valera as a leader, and the IRA, which gives some indication of public opinion on Ireland. Though this included questions that were conceptually chaotic, conflating race and nationality (*MO Race Directive Questionnaire*, 1939), with some respondents commenting on their poor definition (*MO Directive Respondent 1143*, 1939; *MO Directive Respondent 1318*, 1939; *MO Directive Respondent 1326*, 1939; *MO Directive Respondent 2104*, 1939), a sizeable number of unsolicited additional subjective remarks are recorded. Unfortunately, the question relating to the IRA is a closed question, asking 'Have the recent activities of the IRA influenced your attitude to the Irish as a Race?', mostly soliciting the useless answer 'yes' or 'no'. However, the additional comments reveal attitudes. The most noticeable of these is that IRA activity tended to strengthen existing prejudices, such as that it had 'Confirmed my low opinion of their mentality' (*MO Directive*

Respondent 1108, 1939), and had 'strengthen[ed] my conviction as to their worthlessness as a race' (*MO Directive Respondent 1599,* 1939). Further comments indicated an increased dislike (*MO Directive Respondent 1616*, *1939*), increased belief in Irish 'stupidity' (*MO Directive Respondent 1335*, 1939) and continued distrust (*MO Directive Respondent 1286*, 1939). Additional comments also betray a belief that Irish people were, by their nature, predisposed to carry out an illogical and violent anti-British campaign, citing Irish 'characteristics' of untrustworthiness (*MO Directive Respondent 1286,* 1939), poor intelligence (*MO Directive Respondent 2091,* 1939), paranoia (*MO Directive Respondent 1577,* 1939), irresponsibility (*MO Directive Respondent 1289,* 1939), hooliganism *(MO Directive Respondent 1272*, 1939), disloyalty (*MO Directive Respondent 1452,* 1939), or fanaticism (*MO Directive Respondent 1178*, 1939) as causes of the IRA campaign. Additionally, some felt the Irish easily 'worked up' as a group (*MO Directive Respondent 1980*, 1939), gullible and implying they lacked ability to initiate the bombing campaign themselves. Indeed, four respondents suspected German involvement (*MO Directive Respondent 1206*, 1939; *MO Directive Respondent 1563*, 1939; *MO Directive Respondent 1980*, 1939; *MO Directive Respondent 2090*, 1939), a theme that would recur throughout the war. Religious feeling also influenced attitudes, with a respondent deploring the inability of the Catholic Church to denounce the IRA (*MO Directive Respondent 1975*, 1939), and another noted she had 'always found the Irish wanting in a sense of reality…although I have good friends who are Irish. These latter are...Protestants, which in my opinion, means greater intelligence' (*MO Directive Respondent 1577*, 1939). The survey evidences opinion that historical arguments about Ireland were being recycled, suggesting an expectation that history would repeat itself, and Ireland would cause Britain harm when at her weakest[8].

Nevertheless, the survey reveals some comments that indicate Irish people were not seen as a monolithic 'type', but as a group composed of individuals. One such response notes succinctly 'No – similarly Hitler does not change my regard for the German people' (*MO*

[8] The ultimate manifestation of this belief in Irish perfidy was the 1916 Easter Rising, and the attempts to land arms in Kerry, from Germany, by Sir Roger Casement. This plot was often expected to be repeated in WW2.

Directive Respondent 1298, 1939), and another concludes 'I don't think the IRA represents the views of the average Irish man' (*MO Directive Respondent 1057*, 1939). Others sympathised with the IRA cause but not their methods (*MO Directive Respondent 1608,* 1939), but only three indicated some curiosity as to motivation for the campaign (*MO Directive Respondent 1151*, 1939*; MO Directive Respondent 1287*, 1939; *MO Directive Respondent 1493*, 1939). A lone voice noted 'Greater sympathy' (*MO Directive Respondent 1431*, 1939). Additional comments also betrayed antipathy unrelated to the IRA, combining with other prejudices to form tropes of Irishness. Comments on the IRA combine with abhorrence of Irish labour 'here while their country maintains its present awkward attitude' (*MO Directive Respondent 1433*, 1939), while another combines antipathy towards the IRA with the 'official Irish attitude towards conscription' adding 'I would turn every Irishman out of Great Britain…and out of the colonies too, until they chose to become, officially, loyal and friendly members of the empire' (*MO Directive Respondent 1452,* 1939). Most additional comments indicate a distinct, sometimes violent, antipathy toward the IRA, an almost total disregard for its political motivation, and a distinct linkage between the IRA, the Irish population, and the Irish government. It appears that, for these respondents, Irish immigrants, the Irish government, and the IRA were all linked facets of a problematic 'race'.

2.4 EXECUTIONS

Ultimately Peter Barnes and James McCormack were executed for the Coventry bombing. Neither made or planted the bomb, though McCormack had been present when the bicycle to which the bomb was attached was bought, and Barnes had transported the explosives to Coventry[9]. British law convicted both men based on the concept of 'common enterprise' with the unknown bomber, and mastermind, yet no sources found in this survey mention this important concept or admit their minor roles, preferring to condemn those that were caught. MO reveals that

[9] It has been suggested that Dominic Adams, father of Gerry, organised the bombing but managed to escape to Northern Ireland, afterwards being no longer trusted by the IRA Council. The same writer argues the device was intended to damage a nearby substation but was left in Coventry centre by a panicked volunteer who later spent many years in the Irish Asylum system after being ejected from the IRA (McKenna, 2016)

their execution in February 1940, was the stuff of public conversation, though opinions on the IRA had hardly changed since the 1939 survey. MO Diarist #5039.9 recounts 'according to friends there have been many suggestions of torture, starving and lynching' (7/2/1940, *MO Diarist 5039.9*). Another diarist recalls a fellow worker remarked 'Good job too!' at the executions but regretted that there were 'six victims and only two swinging for it', at which his co-workers judged him 'a bloodthirsty devil' (2/2/1940, *MO Diarist 5032*). A more sympathetic opinion is shared by Diarist #5102, a student from Armagh studying in Dublin, who regretted the impact this would have on Anglo-Irish relations and argued the executed men would become martyrs to Irish Nationalists (06/02/1940, MO Diarist 5102). However, an editorial neatly states public opinion on this matter by suggesting that, like the British people, the Irish should 'by now, surely, ought to be getting rather tired of the doctrine that any sort of ruffianism is justifiable in the name of politics' (*Birmingham Post*, 10/02/1940, p.4) betraying ignorance of the Irish States continual attempts at suppression of the IRA since independence. Sir John Maffey, British Representative to Eire, noted that after the executions 'the congenital anti-English complex was inflamed…But 'second thoughts' have been very powerful and salutary in many places', implying that the executions may have been, at some level, used to show de Valera the dissatisfaction of Britain over neutrality (*TNA, DO 35/1107/1*). However, Maffey was right in suggesting the impact of the executions would be short-lived and they would be quickly forgotten [10] in the context of war.

2.5 HISTORICAL ANTIPATHY

British Intelligence made consistent effort to evaluate Irish opinion on the war both to pre-empt any unhelpful action that the Irish government might undertake, and to assure itself of the 'loyalty' of those Irish involved in the Forces and Industry in Britain. Frank Pakenham at the MOI 'estimated that eight out of ten people supported neutrality and were 'mildly sympathetic'

[10] Brendan Behan was an IRA inmate at Winson Green prison when Barnes and MacCormack were hanged. When "The Quare Fellow", his play based on his experiences around the executions, was staged in Birmingham in 1964, the city's theatre critics had forgotten the hangings which had influenced Behan's work (Moran, 2010, pp. 161-162).

to the Allies (23/10/1939, *TNA, DO 35/1005/10*). This analysis was supported by Sir John Maffey and, then Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain (22/4/1940, *TNA, DO 130/12*), and was broadly reassuring, as it indicated the majority favoured an Allied victory (McMahon, 2008, p. 371), but such assurance was unable to overcome the effects of a deep cultural and historical animosity between the two nations. Despite little evidence of current IRA activity, historical, cultural, and religious tropes of 'Irishness' re-emerged suggesting the IRA would once again 'rebel' at time of British trial, echoing the feelings of the MO 1939 Race Survey contributors. HI reported suspicions that 'another Casement plot is being hatched' (24/6/1940, *TNA, INF 1/264*) and a newspaper, reporting the landing of surviving Greek sailors by a U-boat at Ventry harbour, recalled the landing of Sir Roger Casement at nearby Banna Strand in 1916, not once, but twice in the same article (*Coventry Midland Daily Telegraph*, 05/10/1939, p.1). At a time when public opinion castigated the Irish for holding grudges over past grievances, *The Sphere* magazine, despite arguing that 'Ireland on the war on our side would be no more useful than it is now, except for those bases at Berehaven and Buncrana', reminded its readers of Irish perfidy in an even older rebellion, where 'Irish volunteers' had invited French invasion in 1798 (Grey, 18/01/1941). Clearly neither side could help but be influenced by the past.

An Admiralty Intelligence report from Eire in 1941 similarly displays continued distrust of the Irish government based on events and allegiances in the Irish revolution twenty years before. A report, titled 'Irish Affairs – 'Quislings in Eire', reports on Irish politicians who were still assumed, by British Intelligence, to owe some vestigial allegiance to Britain, an assumption becoming progressively less true as the Irish Constitution and law had developed since 1922. The report suggested which Irish politicians were anti-British based on their revolutionary past, rather than their politics in the succeeding eighteen years. With definite undertones of disrespect, if not contempt, Irish government Ministers and senior politicians are accused of being pro-German even to the point of betraying de Valera if they had the chance, or of gaining their position by pure luck (*TNA, ADM 22/3486*). The historical influence of religious feeling also recurs denouncing the Roman Catholic Church for failing to 'instruct every congregation in the duty to

renounce this infamous association and to give all aid to the civil power to detect and suppress it' (*The Times*, 30/03/1939, p.10), despite the pronounced antipathy between the IRA and the Catholic Church since the Church excommunicated the Fenians alongside all members of secret societies. These attitudes existed alongside more measured, and informed, attitudes in MI5 and MI6, and those less intransigent politicians such as Eden, Attlee, MacDonald and Cranborne.

The perceived problem of the IRA was also linked to another trope of Irishness, that is damaging immigration. A pre-war letter to the Dominions Office, from a Provincial secretary of the Primrose League, suggests action to stop Irishmen in England 'obtaining controlling positions in our country' such as the Civil Service and the Police forces, and asserting that the question of Irish immigration was 'a much more important subject than the average Englishman imagines' (5/5/1939, *TNA, DO 35/721/1*). Several newspapers published further letters suggesting immigration from Ireland should be curbed to stop IRA infiltration and Irish assistance from public funds, especially since de Valera had declared 'that citizens of Eire are not British subjects' (*Falkirk Herald*, 26/04/1939, p. 2). One editorial also urged deportation of 'known sympathisers' who he noted 'boast themselves citizens of a hostile republic. Yet they enjoy the privileges of British citizenship' (Dundee Courier, 26/06/1939, p.6). The characterization of a '*hostile* republic' within the empire, and with its people holding British citizenship, was one frequently noted throughout the war, recurring more often as the war progressed, and reaching a climax with public reaction to de Valera's offering condolences to the German legation on Hitler's death. This feeling also gave rise to opinion that Eire was availing of all the benefits of belonging to the empire while contributing nothing to it, or even sympathizing with the Empire's enemies.

2.6 FEAR & U-BOATS

During the early 'phoney' or 'bore war' many were convinced of potential perfidy and MO records suspicion of IRA activity, in the form of suspicious bomb alerts (7/2/1940, *MO Diarist 5341*; 5/2/1940, *MO Diarist 5352*), and protest at a perceived lack of adequate security

against the IRA threat. One day before the declaration of war a solicitor in local government volunteered to be doorkeeper at his Town Hall, feeling that 'Any ill-disposed IRA man could have blown the place to bits with impunity'(2/9/1939, *MO Diarist 5012*) and a year later MO Diarist Margaret Kornitzer noted no one guarding the gangway of two Royal Navy ships 'against Mosely or the IRA' (14/11/1940, *MO Diarist 5349)*, indicating that, at times, levels of public apprehension outstripped those of the authorities. Opinion bordering on paranoia is recorded in 1939 with an overhead conversation about IRA men in the Army, from which the writer deduces that news of IRA activity may have been censored by the British government (5/11/1939, *MO Diarist 5406*). A similar conclusion was suspected by another doubting the fate of the *Athenia,* who is 'surprised, after the loud denunciation of this on press and radio, to find Churchill leaving some doubt as to whether it might have been an IRA time bomb' (9/9/1939, *MO Diarist 5080).* One noted suspicion betrays either the gullibility or ironic intent of the writer, as a diarist relates a 'Sensational new tale! The IRA has been trying to poison our new waterworks…The boy who told me knows it is true because the boy who told him has a brother in the army and he knows for certain' (10/3/1940, *MO Diarist 5323*). Of course, belief in a 'fifth column' is impossible to deny when it was a popular opinion that 'the first job of the fifth column is to make people think that is does not exist' (McLaine, 1979, p.75), providing justification for believing even the most unlikely rumour. A 'fifth column' panic, coupled with a fear of invasion, created a hysteria which was to drive British policy, at least in the first years of the war, and have a deep effect on Anglo-Irish relations. Newspapers reflected and influenced public fears by publishing stories, based on very little evidence, of German U-Boats using the Irish West Coast as safe harbor, trading with locals, refueling and even building submarine bases, with the aid of the IRA. Belief that such was within the realms of IRA ability, when they could hardly sustain the S-Plan campaign, was an indicator of a certain level of ignorance, if not gullibility, regarding the political situation in Eire. A typical editorial typifies the level of distrust by asserting 'The Irish countryside has always abounded with secret stores of firearms…' which could enable the Nazi's and IRA to overthrow de Valera', invade Ulster or 'establish submarine bases on the more deserted parts of the Eire coast' (*The Scotsman*, 23/05/1940, p.4).

Similarly, because of initial distrust of Irish intelligence and an inability to assess the veracity of rumour and scaremongering, British governmental sources were similarly affected by a fear of IRA and German perfidy combined. Within days of the start of the war Churchill had worried of the 'so-called neutrality of the so-called Eire' and the IRA's 'possible succouring of U-boats by Irish malcontents in the West of Ireland inlets', arguing that 'If they throw bombs in London, why should they not supply petrol to U-boats?' (Gilbert, 1993a, p.28). On the 5th of September 1939 the First Lord asked Admiral Pound for a report by naval intelligence on this possibility and the effects of the loss of the Treaty Ports. By the 24th he insisted 'There seems to be a good deal of evidence, *or at any rate suspicion*, that U-boats being succoured from west of Ireland ports by the malignant section with whom de Valera dare not interfere' (Gilbert, 1993a, p.143)[11], despite equating suspicion and evidence as one and the same. Churchill also equated the treachery of the IRA with the immorality of the Nazi's comparing, in Parliament, the U-boat use of torpedo's, 'the lowest form of warfare that can be imagined', with 'the warfare of the IRA, leaving the bomb in the parcel office at the railway station' (Gilbert, 1993a, p. 472). The vitriol of Churchill's statements was, in the end, tempered, in policy, by more grounded consideration of those in the War Cabinet. Additionally, the specially created Leakage of Information Committee, under Lord Hankey, concluded 'that on the evidence so far available, there was no justification for going beyond the statement that Eire *might be presumed* to be *one of several sources* of leakage of information to Germany' and recommended an increased effort to cooperate with Irish Intelligence (1/11/1939, *TNA, CAB 76/14*). At times these more diplomatic voices convinced Churchill that the best policy was to cooperate with the Irish to obtain the most benevolent neutrality possible, unless the situation demanded otherwise. This did not, however, preclude Churchill from repeatedly charging that Nationalist Ireland was a potential enemy, and venting his frustrations in his victory speech of 1945.

[11] This opinion was based on some of the raw intelligence reports coming through Eire, one of which told of U-boat prisoners being found in possession of Irish cigarettes (Gilbert, 1993a, p. 96). Subsequently the cigarettes in question were found to be German, marked 'Nord-Stadt' somehow being interpreted as meaning 'Northern Ireland' (Baker, 2005, pp. 365, Footnote 333)

Churchill's fears were driven by intelligence that someone of his experience of Ireland should have treated more sceptically. The level of rumour and credulity surrounding the strength of the IRA in Eire was caused by a longstanding lack of intelligence coverage and liaison, with no diplomatic representatives or military attaches appointed to Eire since the Free State formation in 1922. Though MI5 and NID set up intelligence liaisons, and, in the case of NID, its own secret network, they had, in the first years of the war, no way of knowing if the information they found was reliable, and often reported it without evaluation. By January 1940 SIS reported 'a submarine base is said to exist (in)… south-west Clare. A submarine comes in three times a week and is camouflaged with a canvas screen' with the local coast-watch being run by 'an IRA deportee' and the local constabulary 'terrorised' (West, 2005b, p. 58). It was also charged that 'German submarines have brought in cargoes of rifles at various points on the Southern and Western coast, and these have been widely distributed…' (*TNA, DO 35/1107/1*). The most notorious report of this type by Sir Charles Tegart[12], working for SIS in the spring of 1940, reported 'a shadow government' of Germans and IRA ready to overthrow de Valera's government at signal from Berlin, that consisted of 2,000 German 'gauleiters' landed in Eire by U-Boat since the start of the war. Local Irish coast dwellers were said to accept U-boat visits as 'commonplace' (McMahon, 2008, pp. 316-317), in opposition to the findings of the *HMS Tamura* expedition in October 1939 (*TNA, ADM 199/1829*). Similar reports connect the IRA and U-boats in 1944, at the height of the 'American Note' controversy, however most reports of this type are concentrated mostly in its first year of the war, before MI5 and SIS began to assess the veracity of wild rumour more correctly. However, unknowing of these developments newspaper and public opinion remained convinced of a continuation of Irish perfidy as had been seen in the First World War.

After the war Kriegsmarine Chief of Staff Eberhard Gott told British Intelligence that U-boats 'were able to surface, rest and repair in Irish territorial waters throughout the war', at times when they were 'dead ground' (22/08/1945, *TNA, ADM 116/5631*), and were aware of the location

[12] An Irish former, well-respected, Police commissioner in India and Palestine well acquainted with nationalist revolutionaries and Ireland, from the War of Independence, though less so after that period.

minefields placed outside Irish waters by the Royal Navy via German Intelligence (Bew, 2016, p. 142). He also articulated that Eire 'offered a definite base for the German Intelligence service' (22/08/1945, *TNA, ADM 116/5631*) and appeared to argue that this was an opportunity wasted. Paul Bew also argues 'much was owed to German incompetence' in ensuring British safety (Bew, 2016, p. 153), but does not acknowledge the greater weight of contemporary British and Irish intelligence that found no evidence of U-Boat activity in Irish waters. While Bew ultimately argues that 'by the end of 1943 the level of cooperation (with Eire) was high' (Bew, 2016, p. 154), British public opinion tended to believe the threat of U-Boat subversion continued until the German surrender.

2.7 HUMOUR

There is also evidence IRA activity in Britain had become seen as commonplace, irritating and, at times, the subject of levity. *The Times* took the opportunity, after the Metropolitan Water board banned fishing in its waters for fear that the IRA might sabotage the water supply, to joke, bizarrely, that any angler killed by his own bombs while playing a big fish would die a 'glorious and enviable' death (*The Times*, 26/05/1939, p.15). There were even some newspaper cartoons making fun of the effect of unfounded IRA scares (*Evening Standard*, 30/08/1940, LHMA). Some levity was even in evidence four days after the fatal Coventry bombing where an MO diarist complained of an Irish domestic leaving the families employment on bad terms and threatening 'proceedings', with a joke that her mother was still expecting 'a bomb through the letterbox' (29/8/1939, *MO Diarist 5422*). Some even felt a sense of excitement as a welcome relief from the monotony of the 'bore war', with an MO Diarist relating a search for explosives at their university but regretting that 'as there were no bombs found, there were no heroes. What a shame!' (5/2/1940, *MO Diarist 5352*). A Royal Mail worker related explosions in his sorting office but was only concerned with wondering if he could sell his story to the newspapers (12/12/1939, *MO Diarist 5089*). It seems that even those caught up in IRA activity were remarkably unfazed, because the IRA, in the face of Hitler, had faded in its significance. Resorting

to bickering and name-calling, by March 1940, a *Picture Post* writer on Belfast felt able to characterize Southern Ireland as 'the spoiled child of the British Commonwealth' and the IRA behaving 'like overgrown infants' (Ervine, 02/03/1940), to which a reader factually replied that most IRA members actually hailed from Belfast not Dublin (C. Lee, 23/03/1940). In general, however, the argument over the IRA reflected the

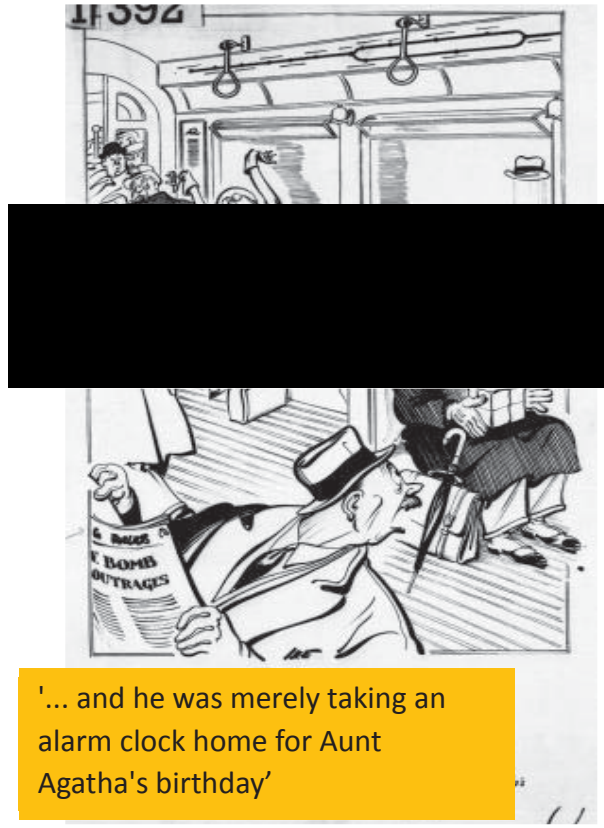


Figure 2: Reaction to Early IRA Attacks (Evening News, 13/02/1939)

perceived seriousness of the IRA threat as a fifth column, and mostly exaggerated its effectiveness.

By June 1940, the anti-Irish backlash receded and mutated after the fall of France brought the full Nazi threat into stark contrast with the disorganised S-Plan campaign, which had already stagnated due to a combination of lack of funds, and the public safety controls that were enacted in Eire, Northern Ireland, and Britain. Concerted intelligence efforts in Eire to ensure neither the IRA nor the Abwehr used Ireland as a base from which to attack Britain also struck IRA organisation at its root, stifling its ability to operate. As the History of MI5 and Ireland during the

War confirms, after June 1940 ‘no single case of…sabotage by the IRA…is known to have occurred’ (Cecil Lidell, Quoted in O'Halpin, 2003, p. 56), and doubtless the IRA campaign had little effect on the question of partition just when the position of Northern Ireland became of vital importance to Britain at war. The bombings had only served to alienate Irish people living in Britain from Republicanism as the Second World War became the people’s dominant worry (Moran, 2010, p. 162). The threat of the IRA, influenced by changing events, evolved into a mostly fantastical supposed conspiracy with the Nazi’s. Despite the IRA becoming a spent force in Eire newspapers continued to insist that the threat of IRA activity was a problem for the Eire government, and occasionally hinting that forcing Eire to further repression still was not beyond Britain’s scope of action (*Daily Gazette for Middlesborough*, 24/05/1940, p. 4). Newspapers continued to suggest that the Eire governments actions were ineffective, unenforced, or obstructive to the requirements of the Imperial government. However, in fact, IRA activity in Britain ceased and that which occurred in Ireland was ended before anything was achieved, leaving the stories of IRA activity, from 1940, to be more suggestive of public fears than fact.

2.8 Alternative Voices

In 1940 the Irish Censorship department felt there was a concerted effort in British newspapers to ‘spread the idea that Eire was a centre of information being made available to the German’s’ and to cause bad blood between Britain and Eire (O'Drisceoil, 1996, p. 192). However, despite continued public distrust, and fear, of IRA activity, there were some who attempted to explain the continued grievances of the armed Republicans and the position of the Irish Government. These urged understanding of the question of partition and civil rights in Ulster, though this subject was ignored by newspapers who were more convinced that Ulster had proved its loyalty and importance to the UK by joining the war. A letter to *The Times* by Frank Pakenham, later the 7th Earl of Longford, argued that British proposed anti-Terrorist legislation constituted only half a policy while the minority Catholic population of Ulster was denied ‘full freedom of expression for the purpose of propagating their cause’. While deploring the IRA’s activities, but

understanding their political motivations, he could 'feel no surprise that young men, seething with political indignation, should …reach the conclusion that force is the only remedy' (*The Times*, 24/07/1939, p.8). Similarly, another reader's letter suggests the 'only radical solution of the deplorable terrorism of the IRA is the abolition of …the present partition of Ireland', agreeing with Lord Halifax's argument that 'our safety is not diminished, but immeasurably increased, by a free and friendly Ireland' (*The Scotsman*, 29/07/1939, p. 15). Others assured the public that the IRA was not as great a threat as imagined and was being effectively suppressed in Eire. The *Yorkshire Post* argued 'There is no fifth column here…the IRA are an insignificant body in Irish public life…They would not be able to get 200 men out for an act of force' (*Yorkshire Post,* 12/02/1941, p. 2); an accurate assessment, but a rare opinion. Occasionally Irish voices were heard with some papers printing the arguments of leading Irish figures, including de Valera, but a few confused the public by publishing the opinions of more controversial figures such as Eoin O'Duffy (*Leicester Mercury*, 08/07/1939, p.17) and Jim Phelan, both of whom had been out of touch with IRA affairs for some time, and were not, to say the least, typical of Irish opinion[13]. However, playwright Sean O'Casey made a valid point rarely made, in the *Picture Post*, that violence had brought about Irish independence when all else had failed (O'Casey, 1939)[14]. Nevertheless, most comment on IRA motives was based on contempt or dismissal of their actions as purely criminal. Predictably, many of these comments emanate from Ulster, long associated with the most virulent opinions on, and most affected by the activities of, the IRA. A letter in *The Times*, titled Ulster & Eire, denies all political motive for these actions, suggesting that an offer of military assistance from Britain in dealing with the threat amounted to glorifying 'Criminal outrages, …matters primarily for the civil authority responsible for law and order' into 'a state of war' (*The Times*, 09/10/1942, p.7). Another showed contempt noting 'The most effective way of

[13] Eoin O'Duffy had been Chief of Staff of the IRA but his support of the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty and his roles in Free State government had divorced him from the IRA, later becoming leader of the quasi-Fascist 'Blueshirts'. Jim Phelan had supported the Anti-Treaty IRA and was imprisoned between 1924 and 1937 as an accessory to murder. After release he became a successful writer. His view of Irish neutrality was expressed in a bizarre essay titled 'Churchill can unite Ireland' (1940, Gollancz) and he later advocated that Eire should lease the Treaty Ports to the US (*Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 06/09/1941, p. 20).

[14] But he suffered the paper labelling him a British Writer.

dealing with the Irish is to make them look ridiculous...they cannot bear ridicule'. Suggesting the Home Office should imprison IRA members on prison hulks in rough seas 'where the little courage of these cowards would be vomited up for the rest of their lives within 24 hours' the writer argues the IRA men would thus look fools and their movement collapse' (*The Times*, 27/071939, p. 5). Ridiculously simple solutions such as these were frequently suggested that the Irish question would be resolved had the British Government the will to do so. Of course, the fine balance required of Anglo-Irish relations at this time was unknown to most.

2.9 GERMAN INFLUENCE

As we have already seen, even before the outbreak of war the twin threats of the IRA and the Nazi's were being conflated in public opinion, and the lessons of the German involvement in the 1916 rebellion were recalled all too easily as war became inevitable. The public linked the IRA and the Germans consistently throughout the war with HI reporting news of Ireland immediately interpreted as evidence of complicity, with 'strong feeling against IRA and Communists following finding of a parachute in Dublin' despite the urging against panic in the same report (28/5/1940, *TNA, INF 1/264*). Letters to newspapers suggested 'money is coming to these extremists from continental sources hostile to Britain' (*Aberdeen Press & Journal*, 09/02/1939, p.3) and these included Nazi, Fascist and Communist funding (*Daily Mirror*, 23/02/1939, p.14). In early 1939 it was well known that the IRA was funded through subscription in Ireland, Britain, and the United States, yet 'blaming German Gold' (*Leicester Mercury,* 08/07/1939, p.17) was a frequent, and erroneous, explanation of the IRA finances. Newspapers ran speculative stories along this theme with the Daily Mirror suggesting that 'Goebbels…is now working on ex-IRA officers and men in Ireland…to enlist their support for German aims', after ex-IRA men had reportedly received German propaganda leaflets by post (*Daily Mirror*, 12/05/1939, p.36). It was even reported that while the IRA leader Sean Russell was raising $600,000 from a tour of *Irish American* organisations, that 'a number of German American Nazi's

were…present and that they contributed generously' (*Sunday Express*, 30/07/1939, p.10)[15]. Such arguments had helped cement opinion such as that found in the MO 1939 'Race survey', which held that 'Obviously someone is behind the Irish - they'd never think of things like acid in balloons by themselves' (*MO Directive Respondent 1206*, 1939). In fact, Sean Russell had made unsuccessful overtures to the Nazi's in 1938, and Irish Intelligence (G2) were unaware of this until tipped off by the British (O'Halpin, 1999, pp. 128-129, 131), but thereafter the IRA were under close, effective surveillance by G2 throughout the war.

In July 1939 the Home Secretary, Samuel Hoare, had confirmed in parliament that it was now 'a matter of evidence and not of suspicion, that foreign organizations were fomenting the plot' (*The Times*, 27/07/1939, p.5), yet the evidence of this collaboration was not as significant as was, and still is, commonly suggested. The most offered proof, 'Plan Kathleen', a document captured from Nazi spy Stephen Held shared with British Intelligence by G2, is often upheld as evidence of a plan to invade Ulster, but this in fact consisted of preparatory questions which needed researching before any military plan could be put into place. Admiralty Intelligence suggested these questions pointed towards a plan to invade Northern Ireland, with questions 'including disposition of own forces, number and equipment required', but it was admitted 'no actual plan was found in the documents' (24/5/1940, *TNA, ADM 22/3486*). Additionally, a Garda source confirmed 'it was American dollars found in the Held case' alongside Plan Kathleen (*TNA, PREM 3/129/2*). Though these details were not known to the public continued exaggerated suggestions of IRA collaboration with the Nazi's, made their mark. Reports from HI noted 'Anxiety about Ireland', 'Opinion expressed that the IRA would give active support to Germany' (11/7/1940, *TNA, INF 1/264*), and newspapers suggested the German legation in Dublin was especially expected to have 'cultivated close relations with the IRA' (*Dundee Courier*, 25/05/1940, p.2).

[15] Several Nazi spies landing in Eire brought small amounts of money and radio sets, but these were either lost through their own ineptitude or confiscated after capture (Hull, 2004)

Some newspapers accepted that the IRA had been rounded up by the Irish government, yet one indicated how fear of Irish treachery would mutate in the future by asking the question 'I wonder is that why Dr Carl Petersen, press attaché at the German Legation in Dublin, tends to sniff at the IRA in Eire?' (Daily Express, 25/06/1940, p.4), implying that the Germans in Eire did not need IRA help to damage Britain. Another suggested that the IRA was so controlled that 'The real fifth Column danger in Eire comes from the Right. The former Blueshirts…even support a 'Friends of Germany' movement' (*Sunday Pictorial*, 07/07/1940, LHMA). By June 1940 even the popular dailies occasionally wondered what had happened to the IRA, with one letter to the *Mirror* asking, 'Have we really jugged them all, or did they shoot off back to peaceful Eire?' and venturing the suspects were now 'working as a fifth column in Eire for the Nazi's'. The paper replied that the IRA had joined 'a large movement in Eire which has already made arrangements to welcome possible invaders' and that 'two thousand parachute troops have been studying Erse, the official language of Eire, for some months' taught by five of the IRA leaders. The paper asserts the pro-German stance of some had split the IRA, but that what would re-unite them was 'the landing of English troops in Eire - the same old story!' (*Daily Mirror*, 24/07/1940, p.5). Even the absence of IRA activity was thus interpreted as proof of worsening anti-British feeling in Eire. For many it was easier to believe in a continuing 'Fifth Column' than that the crackdown in Eire could have yielded the required results. Inability to believe the Irish government could control the IRA led to continued distrust of Irish motives beyond a time when the IRA was considered a threat by British and Irish Intelligence. Despite all evidence there was still public opinion that 'the IRA is condemned as a purely and senselessly terrorist organisation, completely in the pay of the Germans' (*MO File Report 569 - Airmen*, 1941).

Ironically, the Germans had, by 1941, also concluded that the IRA was a spent force. The only partly successful spy in Eire, Hermann Goertz, reported to the Abwehr that the IRA was useless for their purposes and wished to be return to Germany to relay the true situation 'about which there seemed to exist definite misconceptions' (R Fisk, 1985, p. 357). It was also subsequently found that although 'Case Green' had been prepared it was concluded that a feigned

invasion of Ulster at the same time as the invasion of England, was unfeasible and unnecessary (McMahon, 2008, p. 310). Indeed, Admiral Godfrey, head of SIS, after the war conceded that 'Germany never seriously considered invading Ireland (Quoted in McMahon, 2008, p. 310). However, in the heady atmosphere of invasion fears and spy scares, British Intelligence was so agitated by Ireland that they investigated rumour that 'Germans had bought estates on the Cork and Kerry coast' and were later assured by the Garda that this was only true in one case (*TNA, PREM 3/129/2*).

2.10 Distrust of the Irish Government Response

Though the Irish state had given Britain assurance that Eire would not be used as a base from which to attack Britain, the public were unconvinced by the more sober news reports that told of the Irish suppression of the IRA, and MO reports show that, after the fall of France, spy scares were 'reaching hysterical dimensions' (*MO File Report 172 - Morale 3rd June (Misnamed 'Pilot Study on ARP Preparedness')*, 1940). An MO report reflects this disbelief in studying the possible leakage of information in the Eire cattle trade. The report concludes 'we are far from satisfied that it would not be simple to introduce and interchange people between the shore and these ships', and for information to be passed to the Axis legations in Dublin, recommending 'this is a subject which, *like the Irish*, requires a special and intensive study' (*MO File Report 1245 - Merseyside Shipping Situation*, 1942). Similar concerns are evident in a report on Ulster shipping, noting the large number of Eire citizens working in the ports of Londonderry and Belfast, and their regular crossing of the border. The report insists 'It is not suggested, of course, that these men do deliberately carry information. But …tongues automatically loosen in the neutral atmosphere of Eire'. The report further suggests the Ulster Irish contribute to the danger by fostering poor industrial relations (*MO File Report 1309 - Ulster Shipping Situation*, 1942). It seems to be expected that shared 'Irishness', even in loyal Northern Ireland, was enough to create an environment in which espionage and treachery could thrive.

The refusal of the Irish Government to accept the secret offer of a united Ireland 'in principle' to be decided after the war, also led the British government to suspect their intentions. This suspicion was particularly directed against the Irish army, which had grown out of the IRA in 1922, and whose senior officers had distinguished themselves in the War of Independence. As a result, the British services were reluctant to share intelligence and the RAF considered the 'they would give it to the Boche' and thus must fight a large portion of the Irish Army as well as the German Armies if Ireland were invaded (McMahon, 2008, p. 179). The same attitude was expressed by the Foreign office who stopped the Americans from supplying Ireland with weapons because they felt the Eire army had 'I.R.A. tendencies and there was a risk that these weapons may be used against us' (McMahon, 2008, p. 323). Governmental sources indicate that British Naval Intelligence in early 1940 were convinced the Irish 'government's efforts at suppressing the IRA do not seem to be bearing much fruit' (*TNA, DO 35/1107/1*), despite the introduction of draconian Emergency measures to destroy the IRA. Initial British reactions to the Irish Public Safety Bill, which provided military tribunals to try IRA suspects, considered the legislation too little and too late and concentrated on the paradox of former rebel de Valera working against those who still adhered to the means of 'physical force' to achieve shared aims. A Coventry paper noted that outlawing the IRA was 'wise government' but qualified its support by emphasizing that de Valera 'does not deprecate violent methods because they are violent, his objection to it is that it cannot succeed' (*Coventry Evening Telegraph*, 10/02/1939, p.6). Several letters to the editor make this same point, with one adding that this was reason enough to treat Eire as an 'open enemy' (*Aberdeen Press & Journal,* 08/05/1939, p. 13). While Irish journalist Patrick Campbell held that the Public Safety Bill was the best solution for a people 'sick of the rule of the gun…' (*Daily Express*, 09/02/1939, p.4), most opinion in Britain maintained 'Mr. de Valera has all along been timorous in his confrontation of the IRA conspiracy…which ought to have been smothered at its source' (*Daily Record*, 04/01/1940, p.6; *Dundee Courier*, 28/12/1939, p.4). A section of British opinion was convinced these measures would not be effective and one writer, unimpressed by the Public Safety Bill, suggested that Eire should pay damages to the UK because 'It is an elementary principle that a country shall take effective steps to prevent its nationals using its territory as a

basis of preparations for attack on another country' (*The Scotsman,* 06/01/1940, p. 11). Further the Irish governments petition for mercy to be shown to the Coventry bombers was interpreted by some as evidence that in Ireland 'violence organized upon political grounds is still condemned with reservations' (*Birmingham Post*, 08/01/1940, p. 4).

However, by July 1940 a 'General Report on the Position in Eire' concluded 'the Germans do not control or communicate with the IRA in Northern Ireland in any way, and it is considered to be very doubtful that they have control over the IRA in Eire except in respect of a small body' (*TNA, PREM 3/129/2*). A 1947 post-war report from Admiralty Intelligence noted the most successful spy in Eire, Hermann Goertz, had remained at large[16] long enough to contact the IRA and discuss 'Plan Kathleen', but found 'little active co-operation, from the IRA, and is believed to have devoted most of his energies to planning a return to Germany'. This report concludes the measures taken in Eire were 'strenuous and efficient' with 'close watch kept on the German Legation by the civic guard' and a still redacted section after this admission suggests more controversial surveillance than is publicly acceptable in one or both countries may have been used. The same report in 1947 admitted 'As we know from German records, no naval activities favourable to the Germans took place in Eirean (sic) waters, and there is no evidence of the Eirean (sic) coast being used for U-boat, or supply bases' (Aug 1947, *TNA, ADM 22/3486*). Newspapers however, still believed the Irish government ineffective against the IRA arguing that 'Many of the leaders, we are told, have been imprisoned, but those left would offer a more powerful and ruthless gang as a spearhead for Hitler's internal disruptive warfare than he has yet had in any country' (*News Chronicle*, 01/07/1940, LHMA). This newspaper discourse remained until the tide of the war had firmly swung towards the Allies, with the same argument, that 'it is clear that despite all precautions it (the IRA) is far from having been effectively suppressed' (*Dundee Courier*, 26/04/1943, p. 2), despite there being no evidence of continued IRA attacks. However, when suppression of the IRA was accepted, and the Allies were winning the war, the

[16] But under surveillance by G2, to flush out the remaining IRA leaders.

threat from Ireland evolved from insidious IRA activity to that of the Axis powers representatives in Eire.

2.11 Conclusions

Fear of potential IRA activity in, and against, Britain during the war had far greater effect on public opinion of Ireland and the Irish, than the IRA campaign destructively achieved. Eventually the 1939 campaign became 'owned by the British wartime experience, a disregarded prelude to 'the real thing'' (Evans, 2012), yet its contemporary significance should not be ignored. A sizeable backlash against Irish people in Britain served to alienate the Irish in Britain from their British neighbours, as Irishness became analogous to violence and the threat of danger. 'Irishness' had become politicised as a threat to the nation at a particularly threatening time and as a result the Irish in Britain, in fear of this backlash felt pressure to denounce the IRA, and elements of Irishness, to feel safe. It is a marker of the significance of this backlash that Irish organisations in Britain sought immediately to distance themselves from the IRA. The level of violence and threatened potential violence unleashed by this backlash indicates that British public opinion could easily support punitive measures against Eire, and that they were predisposed to believe the worst about Irish motivations, intentions and actions relating to the impending war.

In general, the campaign served to re-enforce opinions already held by many, and to bolster a distinct cultural antipathy towards the Irish based on previous Anglo-Irish history. The Irish were perceived as having supported the IRA in the past, at a time of British weakness, and the IRA campaign served to prove, for most, that they would do so again. With the outbreak of war, the IRA campaign was not forgotten, but became secondary to the threat of the Nazi's, and was occasionally treated with triviality, however, the duration of concern at IRA activity, long past the time that such activity was possible, indicates a high level of apprehension caused by these misgivings. As the threat of the Nazi's loomed larger, and especially after the Fall of France, expectation that the IRA would combine with Germany to attack British interests was at its height,

despite evidence that this period coincided with the effective suppression of the IRA in Eire, and the beginning of Nazi intelligence's disinterest in the amateurish IRA[17]. After 1940 there was no real evidence of any IRA activity, in either Eire or in Britain, yet the expectation of IRA activity lingered with many believing the Germans were funding them. This perception continued despite the historical and continued funding of the IRA by Irish communities in Britain and especially America. Even British Government sources still insisted on a German connection asserting that 'Money is coming for the IRA from the United States...German circles in Americas are believed to be furnishing these funds' (9/4/1940, *TNA, DO 35/1107/1*). Public perceptions also refused to accept that IRA and German Intelligence activities in Eire were under control, despite far more stringent Public Safety and Emergency Legislation being in place in Eire than in Britain.

Many factors combined to perpetuate a British generalised distrust of the Irish and Ireland. The 1939 S-Plan campaign, feeling that the IRA would, as they historically had, attack during wartime and the perception that the IRA was communicating with and being funded by Germany, all contributed to a perception of the Irish as being enemies of Britain. This distrust mutated, after IRA activity decreased, into a fear that Nazi activity became the greatest, yet uncontrolled, threat in Eire. As this change was most noticeable towards the end of the war the Axis 'enemy within' will be discussed in the final chapter of this of this thesis.

[17] The only other evidence of German interest in Ireland, aside from the mooted 'Plan Kathleen', was a proposal by Luftwaffe General Kurt Student to launch a diversionary decoy parachute landing in Ulster in conjunction with the invasion of Southern England (Case Green). According to Student, however, Hitler insisted 'Eire's neutrality must be respected. A neutral Irish Free State is of greater value than a hostile Ireland. We must be glad that Ireland has remained neutral up to the present.' (MacCartney, 1961, p. 727). The airborne Invasion of Crete had also proved far too costly, and the Nazi's never tried a solely airborne invasion again.

3 DANGEROUS NEUTRALITY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Initial British reactions to Irish neutrality focussed on disappointment, a sense of betrayal by a British Dominion and an expectation that, should the war intensify, her neutrality might, or should, be dropped. Many were of the opinion, even in the British Government, that Ireland was a Dominion except when it came to British defence, despite the unqualified agreement that all Dominions had been granted their own decisions on foreign policy by the 1931 Statute of Westminster. The 1937 Constitution of Ireland now officially named Eire, or Ireland in English, also repudiated the Irish states Dominion status by redefining the country as 'associated' with the British Commonwealth rather than a member of it, an expression of de Valera's long held and controversial policy of 'External Association' (McCullagh, 2018, pp 215-6). This repudiation was lost alongside Articles two and three, which laid claim to Northern Ireland 'pending the re-integration of the national territory', considered so 'objectionable, it would be a mistake to take much notice of them' (TNA, DO 35/892/X.1/111) and considered by the Law Lords to bear no 'legal result' (TNA, DO 35/891/.1/98). The changes may have seemed pedantic and empty promises, but they most certainly indicated an intention to pursue a different relationship with the Empire, building as they did on the successive attempts to dismantle Ireland's political and constitutional ties to the Empire, and to lay the foundations for pursuing Ireland's own policies. Chamberlain's 1938 policy accepted the Irish position and was determined avoid intervening in a sovereign neutral state if it could be avoided, but also never formally agreed not to do so in order that Irish neutrality might be strained as far as possible towards British interests, whilst reserving the right to action if it became necessary (Canning, 1985, pp. 242-246). Until Chamberlain's fall it was regarded that 'the only line possible at present is to retain his (de Valera's) good will and to render his neutrality as benevolent as possible' (12/9/1939, *TNA, CAB 66/1/34*), because more stringent measures against Ireland might be capable of 'arousing considerable criticism and antagonism in this country' (2/11/1939, *TNA, CAB 65 2/2*). Public

attitudes towards Eire were notably more understanding whilst the 'phoney war' continued. Though there were some who noted the portentousness of the changing of the decade, recording 'we seem to be at the end of things as we know them, moving forward into a new age…' (23/13/1939, MO Diarist 5102), most were shocked, and undoubtedly frightened by the success of Blitzkrieg in West. This shock hardened attitudes to Eire. Eire, once a potential risk, now became perceived as a positive danger to Britain.

Reflecting an initial expectation that Eire would drop neutrality as her danger increased, HI noted 'uncertainty…about attitude of Eire Government' and suggested the 'loyal' Irish in Scotland would welcome a clear statement of Irish intention (3/6/1940, *TNA, INF 1/264*). However, uncertainty was ended by confirmation of continuing neutrality, in November 1940, which provoked 'a high degree of indignation' and eliciting opinion that 'De Valera will be crushed, and by us', that 'it's perfectly disgusting, they even say they 'll fight us' and 'I know what I'd like to do - wipe them out' (15/11/1940, *MO FR 493 - Seventh Weekly Report for Home Intelligence*). In government it was agreed that Eire's attitude was 'short-sighted and dangerous, and their suspicions are exasperating beyond words' (5/7/1940, *TNA, CAB 66/10/5*) yet basic British policy remained unchanged, whilst the vehemence of condemnation noticeably increased. Though the British and Irish positions were highly nuanced and designed to be reactive to circumstance, in public opinion, and indeed in some government circles, the complicated balance of Anglo-Irish relations was reduced, by frustration, anger, fear, and ignorance, to a binary choice. An editorial opined Ireland was simultaneously benefitting from British protection while remaining neutral and should be forced to accept that 'Southern Ireland and not have it both ways. Either she is with us or against us…' (*Gloucestershire Echo,* 02/01/1941, p.3). As a result, neutrality was increasingly seen as dangerous, threatening, and aiding the enemy.

Public opinion on Irish neutrality presents several themes which require analysis. It was felt that neutrality, by June 1940, had been proven useless against the Nazi's and would prove, in Eire's case, no defence. Additionally, Ireland was considered militarily defenceless and thus prime target for invasion, so much so that forcing 'assistance' on Eire was considered viable. The

status of Northern Ireland also became of paramount concern as Eire's stance could be used as a lever to end partition in return for an end to neutrality. Public opinion, on occasion, expected neutrality was a blackmail plot against Britain in its hour of need. Additionally, the landing of American troops in NI was interpreted as a defensive move against Irish invasion, and the bombing of Irish towns was interpreted as the price to pay for neutrality. Public discourse also frequently expressed that Eire should be punished for her stance. These themes combine and are exemplified in the controversy surrounding the Treaty Ports, undoubtedly the issue which manifested most clearly the problem of Irish neutrality for Britain.

3.2 NEUTRALITY AS DEFENCE

Irish neutrality was exceptional among the Dominions. The day after war was declared a *Times* editorial reflected the early uncertainty of the Dominions reactions to declaration. Relating spontaneous and unrequested declarations of all Dominions, except South Africa and Eire, as 'enormously valuable', it acknowledged the 'special circumstances…frankly realised in this country' that affected the latter two (*The Times*, 04/09/1039, p.9). However, this opinion was not universal, with an MO diarist noting Eire selfish in the face of 'the greatest calamity' and 'the principles at issue' (26/11/1939, *MO Diarist 5349)*. Despite de Valera's continued insistence on a policy of strict neutrality, re-confirmed after the fall of France, it was not long before Irish neutrality was no longer to be considered within its historical context, and was often interpreted as 'a policy of fear and indecision' (*Coventry Midland Daily Telegraph*, 13/07/1940, p.4). Indeed, neutrality in general, not just in Eire, was interpreted as delusional. Letters to the press argue neutrality had not protected the European neutrals toppled in the race to Paris, with some suggesting cowardly motivation in the case of 'poor deluded Eire…pathetic in her blindness', urging de Valera to use his 'moral courage' (*The Times*, 11/07/1940, p.5). Similarly, it was sermonised that the Irish people should feel shame as they stood aside from a war against evil,

taking ‘an unworthy almost cowardly, attitude as this Meroz[18]-like neutrality’ (*Nottingham Journal*, 03/02/1941, p.3).

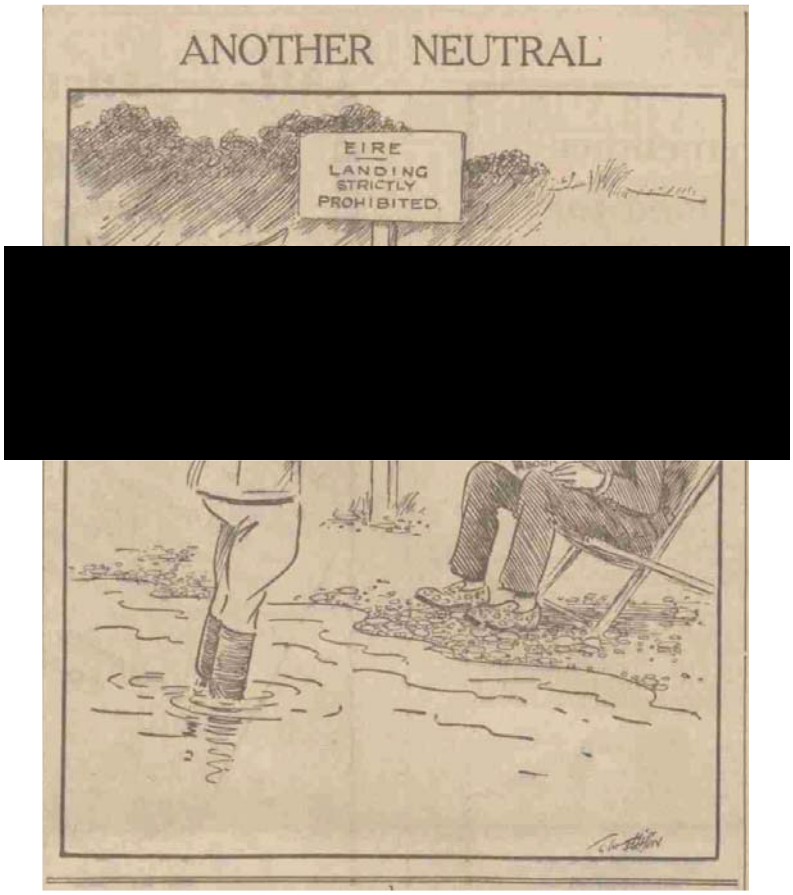


Figure 3: Delusion of Neutrality, (Birmingham Mail, 10/07/1940, p.4)

Newspapers typically reflected and perpetuated opinion that Irish neutrality was soon to be proven valueless and indefensible, and many considered their ‘delusion’ wilful, designed by the Irish government to placate the stupefy the Irish people. This attitude is best reflected by a cartoon depicting de Valera as relying on Hitlers decency in respecting Irish neutrality (*Birmingham Mail*, 10/07/1940, p.4). Meanwhile, postal censorship of Irish mail revealed invasion of Eire was anticipated by both British and Irish writers, and many Irish were ‘pessimistic about Eire’s chances’, while most felt Eire unprepared (29/10/1940, *TNA, INF 1/292*) and practically defenceless (24/12/1940, *TNA, INF 1/292*). However, while accepting Eire was

[18] Meroz: Biblical city in the Book of Judges condemned by God for refusing help their neighbours in battle.

vulnerable, most Irish felt 'any deviation from neutrality will land the towns of Ireland in a worse plight' (24/12/1940, *TNA, INF 1/292*). Though it made sense that it was unnecessary to invite German bombs while the country was unarmed, British opinion dismissed Irish attempts to arm themselves as a 'ridiculous propaganda stunt', arguing that even after being better armed Eire would 'still continue to delude themselves with the fantastic idea that their little state can defend itself against Germany' (*The Scotsman*, 19/03/1941, p.5). Undoubtedly a perception of amateur, ill-equipped, ill-disciplined Irish soldiers was not helped by some newspaper and magazine articles describing, and showing, the Coastal Watch service, created under British pressure and with limited resources, by the Irish government. A photograph in *The Sphere* magazine shows the 'Eire's Security Force' spot-checking a car by the coast, with a non-uniformed officer at a make-shift roadblock giving more the impression of an IRA ambush or robbery rather than the action of a government representative. The picture is tellingly captioned 'Eire "protects" her coast', implying the protection was at least ineffective, or at worst reminiscent of gangsters 'protection rackets' (Bowen, F., 1940).

Cowardly intent is also ascribed to the Irish in MO reports, not overtly linking cowardice to neutrality, though this was undoubtedly a contributary factor, but to the Irish character in general. Irish people are charged with defeatism alongside potential fifth column activity (9/6/1940, *MO File Report 181 - Capitulation Talk in Worktown*, 1940; 1/5/1941, *MO File Report 706 - Liverpool*, 1941), but the charge of cowardice was rare in comparison to impressions that the dangers of Irish neutrality were caused by ignorance, stupidity, indifference, or negligence. Expectation that neutrality would fail to protect Eire lasted long after the Battle of Britain had ended fears of an immediate British invasion. By July 1941 an HI report writer argues that 'final, overwhelming proof that neutrality is no protection against German invasion' was established fact, yet was unbelieved in Eire (16/7/1941, *TNA, INF 1/292*), evidencing that the failure of the concept of neutrality, and Irish disbelief in the threat of the Nazi's, had become a truism.

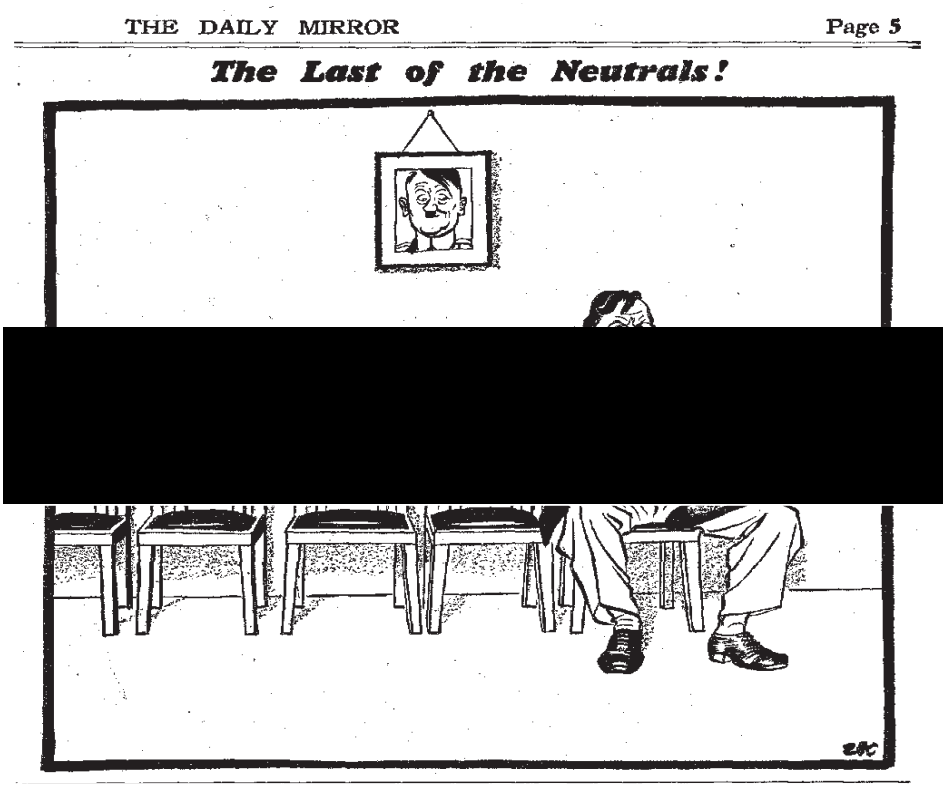


Figure 4: Neutrality no defence (Daily Mirror, 09/11/1940)

Other HI and censorship reports evidence Irish popular support for neutrality, which was felt aided Britain as far as possible, and belief that it protected Eire from bombing (*TNA, CJ 4/30*; *TNA, PREM 4/100/1*). Indeed, in Ireland the fact that neutrality had endured was considered proof of its efficacy in protecting the new state. However, in Britain Irish neutrality was still deemed no more likely to survive than that of the defeated European neutrals. Indeed, in December 1941 the *Guardian* continued the argument that 'nothing has emerged more clearly from the present war that if defensive action is delayed until an attack has actually developed it is likely to be too late', and that Salazar had accepted the preventative invasion of Portuguese Timor 'which is perhaps more than can be said of many residents of Eire' (*The Guardian*, 23/12/1941, LHMA). *The Times* further speculated that the delusion of neutrality was linked to a societal regression exemplified by the popularity of de Valera, who the writer suggests the people see 'as a political thaumaturge' (*The Times*, 28/04/1942, p.5), a worker of wonders, recalling the established stereotype that the Irish were overly superstitious. The argument that neutrality was not a legitimate choice was now so well established by many that it was argued there was only a binary

choice between war and invasion. Though some papers argued that that a binary choice 'seemed…logical…at a distance' and the situation more 'blurred and complex on the spot' (*Sunday Chronicle*, 11/01/1941, LHMA), most asserted 'there is no middle course in neutrality' (*Yorkshire Post,* 15/02/1941, p.6) and that de Valera was 'still protesting his neutrality in a world where such a thing does not exist' (*Daily Mirror*, 13/01/1941, p. 2). For most in Britain the only solution to the binary dilemma was to join the war because 'the neutral, in fact, shirks his share of the burden of humanity' (*The Times*, 17/09/1941, p.5).

3.3 DEFENCELESS IRELAND

However, if neutrality was considered *a priori* as being no defence, Eire's situation was further complicated by being, in military terms, virtually defenceless. O'Halpin argues the new Irish State had neglected defence for reasons stemming from the experiences of the Irish Revolution, which, combined with lack of money and a misplaced faith in the capacity of the international community to protect small nations, left Ireland unprotected, to the standards of others (O'Halpin, 1999, pp. 92-93). During the inter-war years, the Irish Dept. of Finance 'saw the Irish military as a frivolous luxury' considering the increase in taxation required to equip it more dangerous to the state than threat of invasion (Quinn, 2020, p.5) and by 1938 the Army General Staff warned the government that due to financial restrictions the Army was only capable of supressing 'internal disorder', rather than defending against any external aggressor (Young, 1993-4, p.7). In the absence of clear mutual defence objectives co-ordinated with Britain, the Irish Army, at the outbreak of war, consisted of 7,600 regulars and 4,330 reservists, about 50% of what was considered necessary for wartime (Duggan, 1991, p. 179). Government Finance departments continued to cut these numbers until Blitzkrieg seemed sure to consume France, but the threat of being forced into the war by invasion ended the parsimony of successive Irish governments. De Valera approved a 'Call to Arms' and numbers increased to 36,730 regulars and 580 reservists for the duration of the Emergency (Duggan, 1991, p. 183). The Irish Naval service consisted of two Motor Torpedo Boats and grew to ten craft in 1941, and its Air Corps increased to about

thirty obsolete biplanes as and when British policy allowed. All the Defence Forces were consistently under-equipped and short of ammunition due to the difficulty of gaining supplies during wartime. However, the increase in human resources, the one directly under Irish control, reflected the seriousness with which the Irish government now considered defence. British policy, however, was to arm British Forces first and sell only that which was obsolete or unneeded to Eire.

British opinion on the strength of the Irish forces was affected less by their actual state than by expectation of what an Irish Army would be. Paul McMahon argues the Irish Army was considered by Britain 'a weak, divided force, wholly incapable of tackling a German expedition and barely able to contain internal unrest' (McMahon, 2008, p. 322) and HI reported the public had 'no confidence in the powers of the Eire government to resist invasion' (2/7/1940, *TNA, INF 1/264*). Such attitudes ignore the uniting powers of possible invasion, which had helped create a sense of unity in Britain under the Blitz but was somehow not expected to create the same unity in Eire[19]. In fact, the 'Emergency' did create a unity behind the government, a unity in favour of neutrality. By 1942 Britain was being informed that the Irish people tended to regard 'friendly neutrality as something just as good as an active participation' (*TNA, DO 130/28*) whilst the Irish government confirmed definitively that domestic issues were foremost for them by arguing that 'departure from neutrality would break the unprecedented national unity achieved on the basis of that policy' and the 'supposed dangers of neutrality (are) far less than…our involvement in war' (*NAI, DFA Secretary's Files P14*, 05/07/1940). Many Irish also undoubtedly felt that failure to allow Eire the resources to defend herself, reflected a continuation of the colonialist sentiments of the past[20].

As if to bolster this view, British opinion, in general, ignored Irish arguments and preferred to believe in her inability to weather the storms of war. The extent of public fears of

[19] As Frank Aiken put it 'one gun in the hands of an Irishman would be equal to ten guns in the hands of Englishmen defending Irish soil' Quoted in *NAI, DFA Washington Embassy File 119*, 26/03/1941).
[20] 1939 BIPO polls seemed to support this impression by showing 78.21% of respondents were not in favour of giving back German colonies after the war and 70.91% would fight rather than give them back (Liddell et al., 1996).

Irish invasion is best recorded in MO's 'A Survey of Public Opinion, July 1940' which recorded expectations of the course of the war among students in Scotland. The survey questioned 'What is likely to have happened to Britain by the end of this year?', and elicited responses to nine statements covering various possibilities, which were to be answered with the reply 'Yes', 'Probable', 'Improbable' or 'No'. The statements included possible 'invasion through England or Scotland', while scope was left for additional predictions or views to be added if desired. The subsequent report concludes that 56% felt at least an attempted invasion of Britain probable, and 34% expected this to be 'turned out', whilst 15.5% of responders spontaneously suggested an imminent invasion of Ireland and 10% expected that this would be successful, 'at least in the South' (*MO File Report 284 - A Survey of Public Opinion, July 1-16th*, 1940). The report exposes a significant level of expectation among those actively following the course of the war, that Eire would fall to the Nazi's within the next six months. It also shows that Eire was not expected to successfully defend herself, but that the North could be defended by British Forces, as these would be superior to Irish directed forces. MO Diarist #5376 articulates a similar opinion when writing 'I fully expect that Hitler's invasion of England will make a big feature of Ireland, but the complete ignorance, unpreparedness of Ireland, and de Valera's obstinacy & censorship may easily cause us to be encircled' (13/1/1940, *MO Diarist 5376)*. Evidently, Irish leadership, as well as neutrality, was considered no defence and those of education and eminence, such as constitutional lawyer and philologist Prof. A Berriedale-Keith concurred arguing 'It is of course patent that Eire is utterly unable to guard her neutrality by her own resources, which are negligible against modern methods of war' (*The Scotsman*, 06/071940a, p.9). MP J Wardlow-Milne[21] similarly warned 'Eire is terribly vulnerable…hope of a peaceful and independent Ireland rests upon a victory for democracy' (*The Times*, 08/07/1940, p.5). Though these arguments held some truth they were also exaggerated by assumptions that Germany would attack a weaker neighbour and attempt to encircle Britain followed by British invasion or a tighter blockade. Newspapers pointed out Irish weakness and the power of Blitzkrieg, arguing 'the invasion of Southern Ireland stands a ten times

[21] He would be part of a group which would bring about a vote of no confidence in Churchill in 1942

better chance of success than any attempt to invade Britain' due to a small Army 'destitute of experience…(with)…armament…inferior to the armament the Germans could transport even by air' (*Dundee Courier,* 03/07/1940, p.2). This vulnerability and weakness, added to those British common beliefs of Irish inferiority, made it easier for British people to believe that Eire was an undefended, vulnerable backdoor to Britain. Though it made little sense that Germany should attempt two invasions rather than a simpler one, and it was argued that the British Forces in Northern Ireland would undoubtedly step in to repel an Irish invasion, it was still expected that the Nazi's would gain a foothold because Irish Forces were inadequate, and the German Forces close to invincible. The Irish government believed in a singular invasion of Britain conformed with the shock tactics that were a vital part of Blitzkrieg[22], while British opinion argued otherwise, noting that that de Valera 'must realise that Eire is in danger; that Hitler wants Ireland as part of his plan to invade Britain ….' (Liverpool Evening Express, 08/07/1940, p.2). Opinion was occasionally so certain that Eire would be overcome that *Cassandra* predicted 'the miracle will not last' and that 'Eire's miraculous neutrality should have a new emblem - a shamrock lightly tossed into an open grave' (Daily Mirror, 02/01/1941, p.4).

3.4 BRITAIN AND IRISH DEFENCE

However, Britain could not totally blame Irish defencelessness on the Irish, for Britain had also long neglected Irish defence, a consideration that also heightened British fears. The Irish Free State had been formed in 1922 under the understanding that Britain would continue to provide Naval protection, with the new state later taking over this responsibility. For the British, the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921 included arrangements that upheld a contested belief that because of her strategic position, 'Ireland was not …a Dominion when it came to defence' (O'Halpin,

[22] Warnock, Irish legate in Berlin, wrote 'Everybody (here) is agreed…that Germany will endeavour to get in a sharp blow on actual British territory…it is thought this would have a shattering effect on…morale…' (*NAI, DFA 219/4*, 18/05/1940). De Valera argued Hitler would just bypass Eire because he had the coast of Norway, Germany, Holland, Belgium, and France from which to launch an invasion of Britain or presciently that he might postpone invasion of British isles while he made a move to the East (23/6/1940, *TNA, PREM 3/131/1*).

1999, p. 84). Though this position was accepted by the Irish at the time, naval security was not taken over by the Irish, and was never discussed, even as the reserved Treaty Ports were returned to Ireland in 1938. The 1938 Anglo-Irish agreement had given the Treaty ports, unreservedly, back to Irish sovereignty, but with an expectation, not part of the agreement, that Britain would maintain Naval Defence and Eire would afford Britain 'such facilities as required' during time of war or 'strained relations'. When the new treaty came into effect a government communique on the treaty explained 'no agreement of any kind as to talks on questions of mutual defence has been come to or even considered' (*Londonderry Sentinel*, 26/04/1938, p.5). Churchill, then out of government, fruitlessly regarded the 1921 Treaty, which he had helped negotiate, as binding and superseding the right of Ireland, as a Dominion, to neutrality. In October 1939 he believed Irish neutrality 'illegal' (*TNA, FO 800/310*), and by April 1940 he was reportedly 'sick of them' and considered Ireland was 'stabbing England in the back' (*President's Secretaries Files,* Correspondence Ireland 1940, Box 40, Roosevelt Library). However, Churchill was not yet Prime Minister and his opinions, which often showed initial belligerence to Ireland, shortly followed by more sobering second thoughts[23], were offset by better judgement in the Cabinet. Such attitudes would continue throughout Churchill's premiership, and his annoyance at Irish actions bordered on the obsessional at times. As Paul Bew has argued, he 'grumbled furiously at Irish neutrality, but he accepted the fact of its existence' (Bew. 2016, p.148), however his attitudes kept Anglo-Irish relations on a knife-edge, and did nothing to discourage anti-Irish feeling amongst a populace heavily invested in the concurrently growing 'people's war' rationale.

By 1939, it should have been clear that de Valera saw the 1938 agreement as the last barrier to Irish Neutrality, having stated in the Dail that the way was now open to the possibility, 'if they could see (any) way to do it', of supplying Britain with food while staying out of any future war (De Valera, 1938), but it was also clear that this gave giving at least the impression of

[23] At the loss of the Royal Oak Churchill argued at cabinet that the need for safer harbours was 'brought to a head' and that Ireland should be told 'we must have use of these (Treaty) Harbours and intend in any case to use them' (17/10/1939, TNA, CAB 65/1/50). The next day he admitted that he 'had perhaps overstated this part of the case, since other anchorages were available (18/10,1939, TNA, CAB65/1/51)

close co-operation with Britain (McCullagh, 2018, p. 150). However, by the outbreak of war, it was clear to those who took interest that Eire would be neutral and therefore not be granting the use of the former treaty ports, because this would have amounted to an unneutral act. The differing perceptions of what 'close co-operation' meant to each nation, food exports to Britain from Eire to the Irish, and some form of joint defence to Britain, caused a sense of 'betrayal' of expectation, albeit one never set out in concrete terms, that led to the controversy and heated opinion, despite the situation being largely created by British policy.

As we have seen Eire had neglected its own defence for many reasons, but, if Britain continued to argue the defensive indivisibility of the British Isles, Britain was equally culpable, suffering from 'welcome forgetfulness' (Moulton, 2014, p. 2) about Ireland. Indeed, by 1930 it was clear that the British public attitude to Eire was one of indifference, as if the age-old 'Irish Question' had been solved, and by repressing the past it might not again arise. As A J P Taylor so bluntly put it, 'Men were bored with the Irish Question' (Taylor, 1965, p. 161). In addition to never raising the question of naval defence of Ireland with the new Eire government, Britain sent no military attachés or diplomatic representatives to Eire before the 1938 Anglo-Irish treaty was confirmed. British and Irish forces later agreed to joint talks held to better the Naval defences at Berehaven (R Fisk, 1985, pp. 115-116), yet there was still a tendency to blame the Irish government for the impasse. British government documents often betray some dismissive attitudes towards the Irish. Maffey described de Valera's attitude towards upgrading Irish coastal defences as 'like that of a man who declined to insure his house against fire because the idea might alarm his wife' (20/6/1940, *TNA, ADM 116/5631*), implying de Valera was ruled by fear rather than taking careful consideration of potential outcomes. Suspicion of Irish motives was frequent, especially after Eire's refusal of the British offer to consider unification of Ireland, and because many leaders of the Irish Army had previously fought against Britain in the Irish War of Independence (McMahon, 2008, p. 323). Newspapers had reported that Eire frequently requested arms supplies so that they could defend themselves (*Sunday Express*, 10/08/1941, p.8) but most in government agreed it was inadvisable, assuming that arms given to Eire could find their way

to the IRA because ‘an Irishman does not like to give back firearms once he is in possession of them’ (*TNA, PREM 3/129/2*). Though the possibility of making Eire beholden to Britain by giving them arms, and using this to force concessions on supposed U-boat incursions, had been raised at the beginning of the war (West, 2005b, p. 38), by 1940 Malcolm McDonald insisted to de Valera that Britain required ‘better assurance that Irish resistance to the enemy would be effective…(then) we should be ready to let him have additional arms’, leaving de Valera to ask why would it be better to send in equipped British troops rather than just giving arms to the Irish troops already in place (23/6/1940, *TNA, PREM 3/131/1*). Such preconditions were interpreted in Eire as an insulting lack of trust coupled with an arrogance that denied an independent state an opportunity to defend itself. Evidently British opinion was that the Irish could not be trusted with British safety.

3.5 Britain’s Backdoor: Invasion of Ireland

For the British Forces invasion of Eire was considered less likely than public opinion often argued. In May1940, Admiral Forbes argued an invasion of Eire was possible, but also that no such operation against Britain could be mounted without air superiority. He also argued that to keep the Northern Atlantic routes open, and protect Eire, a strong Northern patrol and a powerful covering force at Scapa Flow provided the best defence, which also covered the Faroe Islands, and did not require use of the Treaty ports (S. W. Roskill, 1954, pp. 251-252). After some sceptical argument from the Chiefs of Staff, who considered it was ‘highly probable’ that Germany wanted bases in Eire from which to attack Britain, Forbes’ policy was agreed. At the same time Churchill was undecided, agreeing that invasion by Germany was unlikely (20/6/1940, *TNA, CAB 65/7/68*) but at other times argued an Irish civil war would be advantageous to Britain as it would enable Britain to take Berehaven (Gilbert, 1993a, p. 204). That the latter opinion was expressed shortly after the Dunkirk evacuations yet before the capitulation of France suggests a tendency for fears over Eire neutrality to re-emerge at times of military defeat or setback.

This pattern also appears in public opinion with HI and MO sources noting frequent reports of rumoured invasion of Eire or invasion of Britain through Eire, mostly between May and November 1940, a period characterised by the greatest setbacks to the British and Allied cause. Starting with the Dunkirk evacuations and ending with the Battle of Britain, this period was where governmental concern over public morale was also at its height. Rumours of invasion of Eire appear early on with HI noting rumour gaining such ground that an announcement on Anglo-Irish mutual defence was expected (31/5/1940, *TNA, INF 1/264*). An MO report characterises June 1940 as a period of general calm but emphasises the volatility of public morale where people were occasionally 'exceedingly anxious' and where 'London consistently shows more anxiety, more sudden swings, and potential panics', with 'spy scares' and a particular 'increase in rumour current in early June' (*MO File Report 172 - Morale 3rd June (Misnamed 'Pilot Study on ARP Preparedness')*, 1940), when it was becoming clear that France would be defeated. Though at times 'very little fear is expressed' and invasion was often discussed with humour[24] (1/6/1940, *MO File Report 286 - Prediction, Restriction and Jurisdiction*, 1940), the defeat of France brought about a distinct change.

MO report argued that after the defeat of Holland and Belgium a new optimism descended, and people felt air raids and invasion were still far away, interpreted as 'the product of our own propaganda' (*MO File Report 172 - Morale 3rd June (Misnamed 'Pilot Study on ARP Preparedness')*, 1940). Yet a few days later another reported frequent rumour of possible invasion of Ireland (*MO File Report 254 - 'Morale Today 6/7/1940'*, 1940) and an MO diarist records a discussion with a work colleague who argued 'I think he'll attack Ireland. That's where the danger is - there should never be this "Eire"' (9/7/1940, *MO Diarist 5083*), indicating that some felt the danger so great as to excuse the denial of Irish independence. Occasionally opinion went so far as to portray neutrality as an invitation to invade for both sides, with editorials arguing that while the sincerity of Irish assertions that invasion would be resisted 'cannot be doubted', a 'nucleus

[24] MO FR 286 'Prediction, Restriction & Jurisdiction' 01/06/1940 noted 'typical conversation' on predicted 40 days of rain. 'It had to stop - must be fine for Hitler', 'Oh yes - he's coming on Friday, isn't he? Mustn't rain for him'. The observer wrote 'People are rather cynical about it…'

Saturday, July 6, 1940 THE DAILY MIRROR Page 5

Daily Mirror

Geraldine House, Fetter-lane, E.C.4. Holborn 4321. 42-48, Hardman-street, Deansgate, Manchester, 3. Blackfriars 2185-6-7-8-9

VIVE LE FUEHRER!

We do not say it would be lost. Oh no! But Ireland must not hinder us in our fight for victory.

Mr. de Valera would not be able to defend Eire. Craigavon could not defend Ulster.

There is absolutely no excuse now why Ulster and Eire are not united behind the British shield. To plead neutrality is fatal stupidity. Denmark, Norway, Holland and Belgium were neutral. Their neutrality destroyed them.

Figure 5: First France then Eire (Daily Mail, 06/07/1940)

of an efficient fifth column' provided 'an invitation to the enemy' (*Linlithgow Gazette*, 21/06/1940, p.4). HI repeatedly evidenced expectation that Germany would violate Eire's neutrality (17 & 28/6/1040, *TNA, INF 1/264*), and newspapers could not countenance any option for Eire other than either letting either Britain take over Eire's defence or have Germany invade, because Eire represented such 'an obvious invitation to German invading forces' (*Manchester Evening News,* 08/07/1940, p.2).

Some argued that Hitler would gain inspiration from the past. *The Times* first referred to the works of Professor Ewald Banse suggesting these inspired the Nazi's (*The Times*, 22/07/1939, p.11). Banse predicted a long hard-fought war against the 'Anglo-Saxons' (*The Times*, 13/01/1940, p.5) which would achieve Hitler's aims (*The Times*, 23/12/1939, p.5). By June 1940 letters to the Editor argued Banse's 1934 plan, which included a landing on Merseyside from Ireland, could be the basis for a 1940 invasion (*The Times*, 04/06/1940, p.4). The Banse plan was

wisely suggested as a blueprint for invasion in various newspapers[25] and encirclement by invading simultaneously from France and Ireland became the expected method used to overcome the RAF's continued air superiority over the channel[26]. This also seemed more plausible given popular opinions of Irish defencelessness, the IRA, and Nazi spies in Eire, alongside isolation of Britain as the last remaining opponent of Nazi Germany. HI reflected expected attack from the west almost as soon the BEF returned from Dunkirk with reports in the southeast that 'many think Hitler will invade first Eire and then Cornwall' (8 & 11/6/1940, *TNA, INF 1/264*), though this may also have been wishful thinking that the invasion land in someone else's back garden. Newspapers spuriously argued de Valera was aware of plans to send 50,000 Germans from Spain, joining with the IRA to overthrow the Irish government (*Lancashire Daily Post*, 13/06/1940, p.5). Where such speculation is offered as a news article it is unsurprising that HI reports note rumours of invasion of Eire across the four Home countries throughout June and July (18,19,25,27/6/1940 & 6,8,9/7/1940, *TNA, INF 1/264*). In this febrile atmosphere German Radio propaganda 'devoting an ominous ammount of time to Ireland' (*Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, 24/06/1940, p.4) was interpreted as 'indicating an early German air invasion' (6/6/1940, *TNA, INF 1/264*) or a diversionary tactic from other action (*Birmingham Post*, 06/07/1940, p.4). Public letters to the press often argued that Eire's delusion on neutrality was caused by an inability to see that the danger from Germany was far worse than any old tyranny experienced at the hand of Britain (*Aberdeen Press & Journal*, 11/07/1940, p.2), once more implying neutrality was based on a hatred of Britain.

There were some more nuanced understandings of Eire's position regarding invasion. Though *The Times* argued that the concept of neutrality had been a war casualty, it nevertheless argued Eire did have the geographical advantage of British protection denied to the fallen neutrals

[25](*Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 03/02/1941; *Daily Record*, 03/02/1941; *Daily Record*, 10/05/1941; *Daily Record,* 15/02/1941; *The People,* 04/08/1940; *Sunday Mirror,* 01/06/1941)

[26] General Student, CIC of German Airborne Forces, had recommended an airborne diversionary attack on NI alongside British invasion (Lidell-Hart, 1948, pp. 229-230) but it is unlikely this scheme was ever more than a personal idea of Student's (Blake, 1956, p. 155note 1). This was discounted as NI was now home to previously unknown numbers of British Forces personnel (Blake, 1956, p. 157). A purely airborne invasion was attempted in May 1941 with huge losses in Crete, after which the airborne division was disbanded.

stating ‘if help were needed to meet a German invasion, it would be neither belated nor ineffective’ (*The Times*, 13/07/1940, p.5), effectively conceding the Irish stance had some validity. Other papers agreed Eire’s position on the edge of Europe made neutrality more viable because ‘hitherto neither of the major belligerents needed her to outflank the other’ (*Yorkshire Post*, 08/01/1941, p.2) or more to the point, the Nazi’s invasion of Britain through Eire would ‘be…a case of doing a very difficult job twice over’ (*Dundee Courier*, 13/07/1940, p.2). Another more rounded view argued Eire held other geographical advantages due to her mountainous and boggy landscape, underdeveloped road system and a lack of natural resources or supplies of use to the invader (*Manchester Evening News*, 25/03/1941, p.4). A number also argued ‘the will of the Irish people’ would not only ensure dogged resistance (*Manchester Evening News*, 25/03/1941, p.4), but also to make Eire ‘a hornet’s nest for any invader’ (*Portsmouth Evening News*, 26/09/1940, p. 2), doubtlessly reflecting memories of the Irish War of Independence. A *Sunday Express* article, on the ‘land of mystery’, acknowledges that its readers probably knew little of the new nation, but well argues the Irish point of view, noting Eire would not, as things stood, enter the war due to the possibility of losing her independence and because she believed her forces could hold back German invaders long enough for British troops to come south from Ulster (*Sunday Express,* 10/08/1941, p.8). *The Scotsman* similarly argued Eire was relying on help from Ulster and ‘Mr de Valera knows this and is well content to let things be’ (*The Scotsman*, 26/11/1940, p.4). This analysis has subsequently proved to have been the basis for de Valera’s high-risk, tightrope strategy of neutrality, designed to make invasion of Eire as fraught and as costly as possible to *any* invader (*NAI, DFA Legal Advisors Papers*, 07/02/1940). However, despite the existence of some understanding of Eire’s position and sensibilities, most opinion did not accept Eire’s nuanced scheme of defence as valid.

However, with the passing of time, and despite ‘Considerable exasperation over Eire's attitude’ (13/7/1940, *TNA, INF 1/264*), ‘interest in Irish question greatly decreased’ (30/7/1940, *TNA, INF 1/264*). Indeed, by August there was some indication that people were being complacent and believed ‘fairly widely’ that ‘invasion (of the British Isles) may be indefinitely delayed’ (1 &

2/8/1940, *TNA, INF 1/264*), while by September 'there is less talk now of the invasion of Britain through Eire' (6/9/1940, *TNA, INF 1/264*). The subject becomes less prominent in contemporary sources thereafter. By October 1940 possible invasion through Eire excites less comment and morale reports for Home Intelligence note no 'particular interest in Eire this week…(and) its significance seems to have receded in the public mind' (*MO File Report 439 - First Weekly Report For Home Intelligence October 1940*, 1940). Nevertheless, HI morale reports kept a section opened for comment on public opinion on Eire until the end of the war, though these often contained no comments, until the 'American Note' crisis of 1944.

Notwithstanding, occasional invasion rumours still occur in other sources, though these often indicated an expected invasion, by Britain, to force the of use the former 'Treaty' ports or prevent a Nazi takeover. Some opinions suggested that 'the excuse …that Britain was restrained by regard for legality will be taken as the final proof of feebleness in high places' (*MO File Report 165 - Notes on the Present Morale situation and Morale Today*, 1940), and that 'if Eire stands up to us, we should annex her, as Germany does with the small countries who stand in her way' (*MO, FR 486 - Sixth Weekly Report for Home Intelligence*). Such action, it appears, would have been acceptable due to distrust and the unpredictability of Ireland's course. Reading a newspaper story, soon proved false, of an offer to Ireland from Hitler, and despite conceding 'It may be historic justice if we have to pay up for our past record in Ireland and items like the Black and Tans', MO diarist #5376 still chooses to believe the thesis of the article, that 'our danger from Eire remains' (13/1/1941, *MO Diarist 5376*). The same diarist later worried about the significance of American troops in Ulster, wondering 'Is invasion considered to be likely then? The Irish might help the Nazi's rather than the hated English' (26/1/1942, *MO Diarist 5376*). This welcoming of US soldiers coincided with a rumour 'that it had been discovered that Germany had used air bases in Ireland to bomb Liverpool' (*MO FR 1165 - Morale in February*, 1942). That such rumours gained some currency is an indication of both the fear caused by distrust of Irish motives, and an ignorance of current political, social, and military conditions within Eire, where neutrality was a

popular and enduring policy. For some MO contributors fear of Irish incompetence, invasion and possible betrayal remained a tangible and enduring concern.

HI reports note rumour of impending invasion of Eire in January 1941 deduced because of air-raids in Merseyside (14 & 29/1/1941, *TNA, INF 1/292*) though by now this caused 'no serious anxiety' because of 'complete confidence in our ability to deal successfully with such an adventure' (29/1/1941, *TNA, INF 1/292*). By March there were rumours that 'Eire is about to be, or has been, invaded' (5/3/1941, *TNA, INF 1/292*) no doubt fuelled by continuing press speculation that Britain would be encircled. An editorial interpreted the release of German propaganda film 'My Life for Ireland' as Hitler's 'preliminary move to establish Nazi justification for the "protection" of Eire' (*Aberdeen Press & Journal*, 21/02/1941, p.6). It has been argued that 'Hitler would not have hesitated to invade Ireland, had he thought it worth the risk' (McCullagh, 2018, p. 198) but the risks outweighed the benefits (R Fisk, 1985, pp. 225-226), and some contemporary opinions agreed. However, this did not affect the dismissive tone detectable in most comments on Eire. A typical article agreed with the Irish attitude that an Axis invasion of Eire 'would be suicide' but could not resist adding the caveat that if Eire gave up her neutrality she would become 'a wealthy and happier nation with permanent security guaranteed' (*Daily Record*, 30/05/1942, p.3), implying that Ireland was still deluded, backward and unstable nation on the brink of disaster and requiring the guidance of Britain or the Allies. The future for Eire was continually interpreted as dangerous, penurious, dependant and self-imposed.

3.6 Blackmail, Unity and Blockade

In addition to popular feeling that Eire was dangerously reliant on Britain and Ulster for defence, it was also asserted that de Valera's government was using the circumstances of war to force an end to Irish partition by blackmail. Early reports on Eire's stance reflected the progress made with the 1938 Agreement which settled all outstanding disagreements with Ireland except partition. Some suggested that 'agricultural interests' in a neutral Eire better disposed towards Britain 'were making efforts to expand their industry for our mutual advantage' (*Liverpool*

Evening Express, 21/11/1939, p.2), and could therefore help feed Britain if blockaded. However, at the same time the War Cabinet had requested the Lord Chancellors opinion on the possibility, legality, and effects of expelling Eire from the Commonwealth. Notwithstanding the ill-feeling felt by some over Irish neutrality, the Law Lords concluded that having Eire outside of the Empire would cause more difficulty than having them neutral within it (7/11/1939, *TNA, CAB 67/2/30*). The Dominions Secretary, Eden, also pointed out that pressure on Eire was 'likely to affect detrimentally the interests of this country either directly or indirectly' and could seriously damage relations with the other Dominions (20/11/1939, *TNA, CAB 67/2/53*). Opinion was divided within the War Cabinet on the level of threat caused by Eire but did not blame the threat on neutrality, because the US was also neutral, but still considered helpful. Similarly, the public felt 'growing hostile criticism of the 'selfish' attitude of America' (20/6/1940, *TNA, INF 1/264*), yet Irish neutrality appeared to be judged differently from the neutrality the US, who traded arms with the Allied belligerents, and Switzerland, which provided trade and economic services to Germany. For Eire, it was suggested, their neutrality was illegal, illegitimate, irresponsible and a product of either self-deception or blackmail against Britain, so much so that it was considered a positive danger that required effective, and justified, action.

It was the refusal to co-operate in a joint Defence Committee for both parts of Ireland that caused indignation to transform into accusations of blackmail. Before this refusal Cranborne had recommended the War Cabinet maintain the Anglo-Irish trade commitments made with the 1938 agreement and avoid any action which 'would tempt Eire further in the direction of economic self-sufficiency', thereby threatening food supplies to Britain (16/8/1940, *TNA, CAB 67/8/20*). However, after the refusal of defensive co-operation, suggestion of an Irish blockade becomes progressively louder. HI in Belfast noted a mixed reaction on joint defence and reflected speculation that Malcolm MacDonald's mission to Dublin had included discussion on partition as well as defence (1/7/1940, *TNA, INF 1/264*). In fact, both Craigavon and de Valera had insisted on pre-conditions before any talks could take place that were inimical to the other side, with the result that refusal to talk was considered in Belfast as 'banging the door on any proposals for a

united military command of Ireland' (05/07/1940, *TNA, INF 1/264*). In Edinburgh HI consequently reported 'renewed anxiety about Ireland' blaming *both* Irish leaders. Craigavon was considered an 'obstacle to agreement…on joint defence' (5/7/1940, *TNA, INF 1/264*) and newspapers pointed out his obstructionism creating unnecessary and intolerable pre-conditions on joint defence (Dundee Courier, 03/07/1940, p.2). *Cassandra*, in *The Daily Mirror* argued there was 'bigotry and contempt for Eire' bordering on 'a religion' from which any deviation 'aroused his bitter hostility and hatred' (*Daily Mirror*, 03/07/1940, p.4). While acknowledging the difficulty of reconciling such inimical neighbours (*The Times*, 08/07/1940, p.5), many newspapers argued both Irelands should settle their differences and co-operate, at least on defence. For the newspapers both Ireland's were acting illogically, yet predictably, with one adding that to expect anything else would be 'false to tradition' (*Coventry Midland Daily Telegraph*, 09/07/1940, p.4). However, most argued the danger to Britain was so great, and Eire so vulnerable, that it should be de Valera who should make a 'spontaneous gesture' (*The Times*, 08/07/1940, p.5) to Britain and Ulster.

By 12th July HI reported the impasse between North and South was accepted as 'an insuperable obstacle' in Belfast and yet in London there remained much anxiety over both Irelands (12/7/1940, *TNA, INF 1/264*). As Ulster had demonstrated her loyalty to Britain, attitudes began to stiffen against Eire. With some arguing that as a commonwealth member Eire was 'under the clearest obligation' to work with Britain, and that the right of Britain to enforce this obligation 'is beyond doubt' (*The Scotsman*, 06/07/1940a, p.9), it became a repeated that 'de Valera is making use of our war difficulties to exploit his seeming opportunities' (*Western Mail*, 29/11/1940, p.5) and charging Irish unification as the price of her co-operation. An offer including a promise of potential unification was turned down in secret (5/7/1940, TNA, CAB 66/9/31), Paul Bew has argued that this offer 'is no clearer sign of the desperation of Britain's position' (Bew, 2016, p. 147), and the Irish government insisted 'Neutrality was not entered upon for the purpose of being used as a bargaining factor' (NAI, DFA Secretary's files A2, 11/07/1940), it was still considered that de Valera 'would have liked Northern Ireland thrown in'(*Evening Dispatch*,

08/11/1940, p.4) with any deal on co-operation. The desperation of the British position was felt keenly, and refusal of the offer served only to bolster opinion that Eire was determined to do anything to avoid co-operation with Britain. One paper spoke for most when it argued 'Eire is a poor, bitter, hopeless little part of an island' and if the obstinate and stupid de Valera 'won't listen, be damned to him. The Allies must …defend Ireland' (*Sunday Express,* 11/01/1942, p.4). Such feelings also inspired newspaper correspondents to threaten Eire, with one insisting that 'a reckoning must come, not by force of arms' but by cutting supplies because 'the lives of the British sailors, lost off the Irish coast, demand that' (*Southern Reporter*, 26/12/1940, p.3). For some 'blackmail' over Irish neutrality served to prove Ulster's worth. Pointing out that de Valera 'in effect' wanted to neutralize NI, a letter to The Times argued the value that Ulster presented to British defence would be unlikely to be 'any less in 20 years' time' (*The Times*, 22/11/1940, p.5). Another suggested he had now lost 'all chance of securing a United Ireland in the lifetime of any living man' (*The Times*, 20/11/1940, p.5), emphasising that Eire's stance was not only blackmail but also injurious to her own interests.

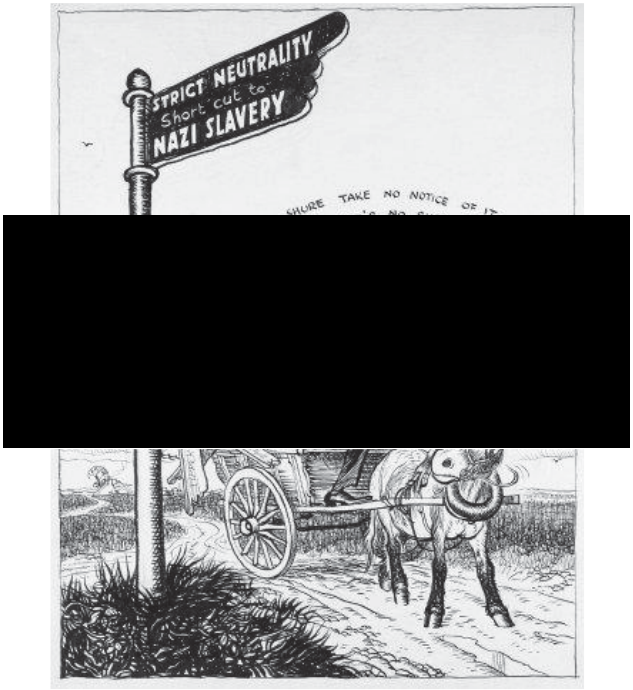


Figure 6: Irish Stubborn mules (Daily Mail, 10/01/1941)

With Craigavon's death it was felt 'any possibility of it (a united defence) now seems to have vanished because of Mr de Valera's stubborn policy of neutrality' (*The Scotsman*,

26/11/1940, p.4), and by 1943 it was argued Eire had 'not fully realised what it had lost' in proving the strategic worth of Ulster, but had also 'forfeited, in considerable part, that American goodwill upon which they have heretofore relied' (*Evening Standard*, 21/04/1943, LHMA). It soon became a bugbear for many that political action against Eire would be impossible, other means of influence, or punishment, were considered. Eire had, knowing she was economically dependent on sales to Britain, embarked on rationing and autarkical policies in preparation for either the fall of Britain or blockade from any quarter. As Kathleen Paul has pointed out it was, after all, necessary as 'the fact of economic dependence made the proclamation of political independence all the more imperative' (Paul, 1996, p. 122), making Eire able to, with some degree of possible success, have her political voice heard in war time. Though newspapers suggested better economic relations might lead to better political outcomes (*Liverpool Daily Post*, 26/061940, p.2), many began to point to Eire's reliance on imports as a potential means to demonstrate what they would lose, arguing 'If Hitler wins the Irish will lose everything - even their traditional right to disagree with everybody' (*Liverpool Evening Express*, 08/11/1940, p.2). An exchange of letters in the Yorkshire Post illustrates public attitudes by arguing over the economic relationship between the two countries. One writer argued Britain should consider what 'we have given de Valera' including providing 90% of Eire's trade and 'keeping' 500,000 Irish workers (*Yorkshire Post,* 15/11/1940, p.6), while it was up to other correspondents to point out that neither were 'given' or 'kept', but constituted 'something (Eire had) to sell which suits us and profits us to buy' (*Yorkshire Post*, 18/11/1940, p.2); a trade which would not have taken place were it not 'beneficial to both parties' (*Yorkshire Post*, 19/11/1940, p.2). Eire was therefore not beholden to Britain for this trade beyond the terms of payment but was considered by some to be ungrateful all the same, including by some in government who considered Ireland benefitted from goods protected by the Royal Navy. Because Eire had long availed of an informal agreement with Britain over the use of British ships to import goods, Churchill, and some in the cabinet, thought it possible to pressurize Eire by denying shipping space, while plausibly denying that this was punishment because it was reasonable to expect British needs to be served first. After de Valera's final confirmation, in November 1940, that the Treaty Ports would not be given to the use of any

belligerent, Maffey, who had previously been understanding and conciliatory of the Eire government, now reported de Valera was 'in a position of dictatorial power' and that his 'first interest is himself'. Suggesting that 'no country in the world will react more readily to economic pressure', he recommended Britain should publicly blockade Eire or at least pay prices which made agricultural sales uneconomic, prompting Churchill to sound out the effects on Britain of a secret blockade (22-23/11/1940, *TNA, CAB 66/14/2*). When these proposals were considered at the War Cabinet Cranborne argued a denial of shipping space would make the Irish recognise that the use of the Treaty ports was mutually beneficial, and Woolton at the Ministry of Food agreed this would force Eire to negotiate on Britain's terms (5/12/1940, *TNA, CAB 66/14/2*). Though the exchequer and the board of Trade reminded the cabinet of potential detriment to British coffers, Churchill sounded out military advice on the practical effects of losing Irish coast-watching and cable facilities (Gilbert, 1993a, p. 1175). By the 5th of December it was already arranged between the British government and the major oil companies that sales of petrol to Eire would be deliberately kept low, and that Eire was not to be told of this arrangement, despite the fact that such supplies could not be used by German operational aircraft or U-Boats (5/12/1940, *TNA, CAB 80/24*). By the end of the year, it was arranged that Norway and Greece would be similarly prevented from using British ships if they did not prevent their own ships supplying Eire (30/12/1940, *TNA, CAB 66/14/23*). The secret policy of effective blockade was begun on the 2nd of January 1941 and, it was felt in the War Cabinet, that this had 'been achieved without their (the Irish) being able to feel that we have deliberately subjected them to pressure' (19/3/1941, *TNA, CAB 66/15/37*). However, it was soon clear that British public opinion was not fooled.

Almost as soon as the secret blockade was enacted newspapers began to interpret the new policy of Navicerts as confirming that Eire was 'feeling the pinch' (*Gloucestershire Echo*, 02/01/1941, p.3), speculating the Irish were starting to believe in their economic reliance on Britain, which would lead to the leasing of the ports (*Yorkshire Post*, 03/01/1941, p.2). British public rumour circulated that Irish petrol shortages were 'due to deliberate British Policy' (22/1/1941, *TNA, INF 1/292*) and newspapers argued the Irish believed 'rightly or wrongly, that

we are putting a sort of economic screw on because we haven't got the ports', citing Churchill's speeches on the Treaty ports and a press campaign against Ireland as corroborative evidence (*Newcastle |Journal,* 04/02/1941, p.4). However, it was not so clear to the Prime Minister that the intention 'to make southern Ireland realise how great a wrong they were doing to the cause of freedom by their denial of the ports' (17/2/1941, *TNA, PREM 3/128*) was having the expected effect. The Chancellor, Kingsley Wood, argued 'the operation was making Eire progressively more uncomfortable' daily and that 'Eire will very possibly come to us in three or four weeks', the report of which was appended the handwritten cursory note 'press on' from Churchill (20/2/1941, *TNA, PREM 3/128*). By September seven months later, Churchill was still asking Wood 'But is the medicine working?' (10/9/1941, *TNA, PREM 3/127*). The effect of the informal blockade was only to drive Eire to more rationing and self-reliance, spurring the government to more extensive state control of the economy and trade, on a par with many of the wartime measures in place in Britain. Rather than finding that 'being Sinn Fein - Ourselves Alone- has distinct disadvantages' (*The Scotsman,* 04/04/1941, p.4). Eire was learning the extent of its economic powers of self-government.

Even as grain production and manufacturing for the home market grew, and visitors to Eire were still reporting plenty of food in Irish shops, reports on 'public opinion in Eire' still argued the Irish man 'correlates the inconveniences which he has suffered with the war' rather than his countries 'absolute dependence' on Britain (30/9/1942, *TNA, DO 130/28*). However, by November 1943, after Lord Woolton's warnings of a worldwide food shortage, there were some questions raised on British policy towards Eire. A letter to *The Times* pointed out a 'catastrophic fall in the volume of Irish supplies of food to this country' caused by a fall in imports to Eire of fertiliser, animal feed, fuel and spare parts from Britain, and that this, coupled with and a restriction in prices paid to below the market level in Eire, conspired to stop a trade in foodstuffs worth £20 million annually, mostly to Britain at a time when it was needed most (*The Times*, 04/11/1943, p.5). That Eire had not come to terms over the Treaty Ports, or starved, tended to evidence the argument that her attempts to ameliorate the effects of the blockade had worked.

Nevertheless, the argument that 'the people of Eire must learn…that they can have no social or economic future outside the natural orbit of the British Empire and the United States…' (*Sunday Express*, 12/03/1944, p.4) carried on, implying the country's independence unviable and upholding the supposed prospect of an unwilling re-integration into the UK.

3.7 Forcing Assistance on Eire

Though there was initially some understanding of the Irish position in government, it was clear by the end of 1940 that the public could only assume the worst about Eire, even as the expectation of a British invasion decreased. An MO report on the 'Immediate International Uses of Mass Observation' indicates the ease with which interference in a foreign sovereignty was considered. The reporter assumes an aerial invasion of Eire is likely and argues it would benefit Britain that she know if the Irish people and their government were at odds over neutrality, so that Britain could embark on propaganda to destabilise the Irish consensus on neutrality (*MO File Report 225 - Immediate International Uses of Mass-Observation*, 1/6/1940). Public opinion soon proved less subtle. By the 3rd of June MO notes that 'excess of regard to legality' was considered as hindering the war effort and the first target of a new, necessary 'toughness' should be Eire (*MO File Report 165 - Notes on the Present Morale situation and Morale Today*, 1940). Though newspapers sometimes encouraged mutually agreed action on Eire's defence 'if Mr de Valera but says the word…' (*Daily Record,* 02/07/1940, p.6), most began to argue that 'assistance' should be forced on Eire for the good of Britain. Churchill had by then already considered direct action on Ireland by asking Ismay, his military attaché, to consider the benefits to Britain should Eire plunge into Civil War because of German invasion (Gilbert. 1993a, p.204). The *Daily Mirror* asked, 'are we going to take the lead in Ireland?' urging that 'we do not want to wake up tomorrow to find that Ireland is in German hands, and that Mr de Valera has done his best and failed… the nation will not tolerate another disaster through lack of foresight and initiative' (*Daily Mirror*, 06/07/1940b, p.5). The failures of the BEF in France created expectation for pre-emptive moves, especially after the impasse between Craigavon and de Valera on a united defence plan became

known. Alternatives were suggested, as the Irish could not agree, including that 'Imperial Forces should at once be sent to Eire, notwithstanding the *technical breach* of Eireann neutrality that that would involve' (*Yorkshire Post*, 08/07/1940, p.2). The next day public opinion feared that because de Valera wanted a neutral, united Ireland Britain should send in troops with or without consent (9/7/1940, *TNA, INF 1/264*). Letters to the editor began to encourage invasion 'to remove the danger' because 'if we do not (invade) then Hitler will' (*Coventry Midland Daily Telegraph*, 13/07/1940, p.4). Others acknowledged that British troops would be unwelcome but failing to see that any foreign troops would also be anathema, suggested an 'international Brigade' (*Daily Express,* 22/04/1940, p.4).

In Ireland such newspaper reports on Irish vulnerability were interpreted as a campaign to force an end to neutrality, and the rejected offer of a proposed end to partition was expected to cause more vehement argument (*NAI, DFA Secretary's Files P14*, 05/07/1940). These stories coupled with news that a Swiss Intelligence officer had informed Britain that Ireland and Iceland would be invaded by Germany on the 15th of July, convinced Walshe, the Eire Chief Secretary for Foreign Affairs, that the campaign contained 'all the tricks and wiles which they (Britain) commonly use against small peoples…' (*NAI, DFA Secretary's files A2*, 15/07/1940). By August Walshe was asking 'has Britain guaranteed not to invade us?' and Dulanty relayed Caldecote's assurance that it was 'no part of their policy to go into Eire unless the Irish government invited them' alongside a refusal to issue any guarantee (*NAI, DFA Secretary's Files P5*, 09/08/1940). Many in the Irish government, comparing the British non-committal response and news media stories to those of Germany, concluded, as Warnock did, that German attitudes appeared more friendly[27] (*NAI, DFA 205/420*, 20/08/1940). Britain's refusal to rule out invasion of Eire or to curtail newspaper excesses only served to exacerbate Irish fears of re-occupation, and further convinced the Irish public that neutrality was protecting them.

[27] Warnock noted of German newspapers the 'tone used in reference to Ireland has never been inimical, and it has often been very friendly…' (*NAI, DFA 205/420*, 20/08/1940)

In Britain, by 1941, and despite Britain's uncertain and reactive policy towards Eire, an HI report on postal censorship suggested British public opinion felt the Irish were suffering from what the writer called 'persecution mania' and a 'neurotic fear of British re-occupation' (2/1/1941, *TNA, INF 1/292*). Nevertheless, several press articles appeared which argued that forcing Eire into the war would be counter-productive and some argued that neutrality was designed to protect and assert Irish independence. One article asserted the Irish people felt keenly the pressure from Britain and argued 'stop trying to push Eire along the way she will not go…this is a separate country, and the British have never recognised that' (*Yorkshire Post*, 14/02/1941, p.2), while another syndicated article argued, as the de Valera's government did, that 'if...Mr Churchill would make a categorical statement that Britain would not seize the ports or enter Eire without invitation, that would have profound affect in improving our relations' (*Newcastle Journal*, 05/02/1941, p.40. However, these were far from the norm. Yet feeling that the problem was caused by misunderstanding occasionally appeared, most notably in a highly unusual public criticism that Britain had failed to convince the neutrals 'of our certainty of ultimate victory', though this did not mention Eire specifically (19/9/1940, *TNA, INF 1/264*). Letters to the editor sometimes argued Irelands 'same right to proclaim neutrality as…the United States, Portugal, or Switzerland', to be 'defended by her own citizens on her own soil' and to be 'as free and self-responsible…as are the other Dominions' (*The Times*, 20/11/1940, p.5), with one writer believing the Irish course to be 'a short-sighted policy' but that it had to be accepted in order to avoid further problems (*The Times,* 20/09/1939, p.9). Journalistic visitors argued the British should 'consider how best Eire can be useful' within their limitations by guaranteeing Irish independence and availing of her food exports at reasonable prices (*Yorkshire Post*, 14/02/1941, p.2). Yet most arguments for forcing assistance on Eire did not take such arguments into account with simple binary analyses of the impasse being far more prevalent. Some argued that Eire's reliance on the British bulwark between Eire and Germany was unfair and immoral and argued Britain should act because 'they cannot go on indefinitely enjoying all the blessings of peace without making some sacrifices' (*Falkirk Herald*, 08/01/1941, p.4).

Other reasons why Eire should be 'brought to her senses' included, foreshadowing the 'Plato's Cave' interpretation of Irish neutrality, that like a 'primitive man sheltering in a cave on the edge of a volcano…the ordinary man just carries on unthinkingly' because 'neutrality breeds indifference', and is relied upon as if it were 'a magic charm' (*Yorkshire Post*, 10/01/1941, p.4). Some simply argued that because Germany had proved they would invade other countries simply to gain strategic advantage Britain could not be constrained by propriety in such circumstances, adding that 'too much time has been wasted in futile attempts to conciliate the government of Eire… (*The Scotsman,* 15/04/1941, p.4). Many opinions conceded the Irish right to neutrality and independent action and argued that British forbearance proved that 'however much we suffer from it…Great Britain abides by her word' and the Statute of Westminster was 'a bond…by which we shall abide' (Daily Telegraph, 07/05/1941, LHMA), with some even seeing neutrality as 'a vindication of the freedoms conferred by the Statute of Westminster' (Western Morning News, 14/03/1944, p.2). Yet most could not square this view with opinion that Eire 'seeks to enjoy the benefits of neutrality at the expense and to the detriment of their friends in their extremity' (*Birmingham Mail*, 11/03/1944, p.3). Many felt the Americans, already giving valuable aid to Britain in supplies and materiel, though still neutral, and with a large Irish - American population, could redress this dichotomy as a 'big brother to independent Ireland' (*The Times,* 10/07/1941, p.5; 26/09/1940, p.5; *Western Morning News*, 15/11/1940, p.2). However, until the end of 1941, American neutrality prevented direct intervention in a war zone and in a country unwilling to accept such aid.

3.8 AMERICANS IN IRELAND

American neutrality was not interpreted as harshly as Irish neutrality. Addison and Crang characterise British attitudes to all the neutrals, at the beginning of 1940, as 'wishful thinking' that they would join the war but attitudes to the US, in comparison to those on Eire, were benevolent (Addison & Crang, 2010, p. 126), From the outset American neutrality was regarded as more reasoned, more representative of the American people, more legitimate, yet still

unfortunate and understandable. Early letters to the press pointed out the American history of neutrality and isolationism, arguing that America could, and should, only act as American public opinion dictated. One letter asserted the US should be allowed time to 'catch up and express itself', to organise her Armed Forces, 'then the neutrality law will be changed' (*The Times*, 26/09/1939, p.5). While most argued America should take its share of moral responsibility (*Liverpool Daily Post*, 23/01/1940, p. 4), the history of America and her internal politics were accepted as a mitigating factor. Throughout 1940 HI regularly reflected 'dissatisfaction at America's attitude' alongside hope that America would 'help actively' (6/6/1940, Addison & Crang, 2010, p. 85). These reports on the neutral US do not contain expressions of antagonism, or hatred, but include expressions of resignation (7/6/1940, Addison & Crang, 2010, p. 91) linked to opinion that Roosevelt was doing 'all that was possible' and 'there was little he could do' (11/6/1940, Addison & Crang, 2010, p. 103). Though postal censorship picked up references to Britain fighting for freedom on the Americans behalf while they profited from arms sales bought with 'hard cash' (5/9/1940, *TNA, CAB 66/11/39*), in general, opinion on the US was far more equivocal than that on Eire, with more signs of irritation evident rather than outright condemnation[28] and threats of action.

However, as it became clearer that America was changing her Neutrality Laws, HI showed more acceptance of US intentions (22/6/1940, Addison & Crang, 2010, p. 143) and expectation that the US would eventually join the war (Addison & Crang, 2010, pp. 140, 193,306,348,373)[29]. The American declaration of war was publicly welcomed and changed opinions on Eire. HI began to reflect suggestions that America could change the stalemate on Eire (14/1/1942, *TNA, INF 1/292*) arguing that protective American forces in Eire would be preferable to the Irish people (6/2/1941, *TNA, DO 130/28*). However, it was plain at the outset that America's entry into the war did not affect the British War Cabinets attitude towards Eire, and despite

[28] An article 'Behind the lines' suggested irritation at the US while stating Roosevelts condemnations of aggression could be recorded to save time 'if he were to have a gramophone record made' (*Daily Record,* 15/04/1940).

[29] Though one newspaper accused the US as making a fetish of her neutrality (*Liverpool Evening Express,* 29/10/1941) as Elizabeth Bowen had done in a report on Ireland to the British Government (9/11/1940, *TNA, DO 130/28*).

Churchill's immediate message to de Valera 'to say that now was Eire's chance to come into the war on our side and offering to meet…at any time' (TNA, CAB 65/20/15), the War Cabinet concluded on the 19th of the month that this offers refusal was not cause for 'immediate action' (TNA, CAB 65/20/24). However, public opinion often expected that the US would pressurise Eire into change. Almost immediately after Americas declaration rumours appeared that American troops would land in Ireland with HI in Belfast expecting that 'American troops will eventually replace British troops in Northern Ireland' (11 & 21/1/1942, *TNA, INF 1/292*). The syndicated 'London Letter' column argued 'if the Americans were to ask for bases (in Eire), they would certainly have lent them' (*Liverpool Daily Post*, 13/01/1942, p.2) and HI reported hopes that the Americans would do what Britain 'hesitated to do', that is '*enforce* some kind of agreement with Mr. de Valera' (21/1/1942, *TNA, INF 1/292*). The eventual landing of American troops in Ulster was interpreted as a signal of preventative measures against invasion of Eire, including possible American occupation of the whole island (26/1/1942, *MO Diarist 5376;* 8/6/1942, *MO File Report 1306 - Americans in Ireland*, 1942; 4/2/1942, *TNA, INF 1/292*), intention to take over the Treaty Ports (4/2/1942, *TNA, INF 1/292*) or an attempt to allay fears of encirclement (27/01/1942, *MO Diarist 5338*). One MO diarist had once felt the Irish would be 'as ready to kill British as Germans', but now was convinced 'there is some hope they'd side with the Americans and help repel the Germans' (27/1/1942, *MO Diarist 5447*). For many it was now clear that such a move into Northern Ireland confirmed suspicion of threat and perfidy from Eire, indeed the level of threat felt is reflected by over-inflated estimates of the number of troops arriving, with one rumour suggesting three million GI's had landed in Ulster (1/2/1942, *MO FR 1165 - Morale in February*, 1942).

Newspapers generally agreed that Eire's position had changed with some suggesting it analogous to that of Iceland, whose defence had been taken over by the then neutral US from Britain the previous year, even adding that de Valera could not entertain suspicion against American troops (*The Scotsman*, 27/01/1942, p.4) despite his immediate protest in the US that

the Eire government had not been consulted on the deployment[30]. The issue of Irish consent, where Iceland had consented to US protection, was often treated as irrelevant in the case of Eire. Indeed, this was the stuff of comedy for the *Daily Mirror* which published a cartoon of de Valera in wild protest trapped between a German and an American soldier (*Daily Mirror*, 29/01/1942, p.3). The same paper continued to represent Eire's choice as a binary one, a month later, by

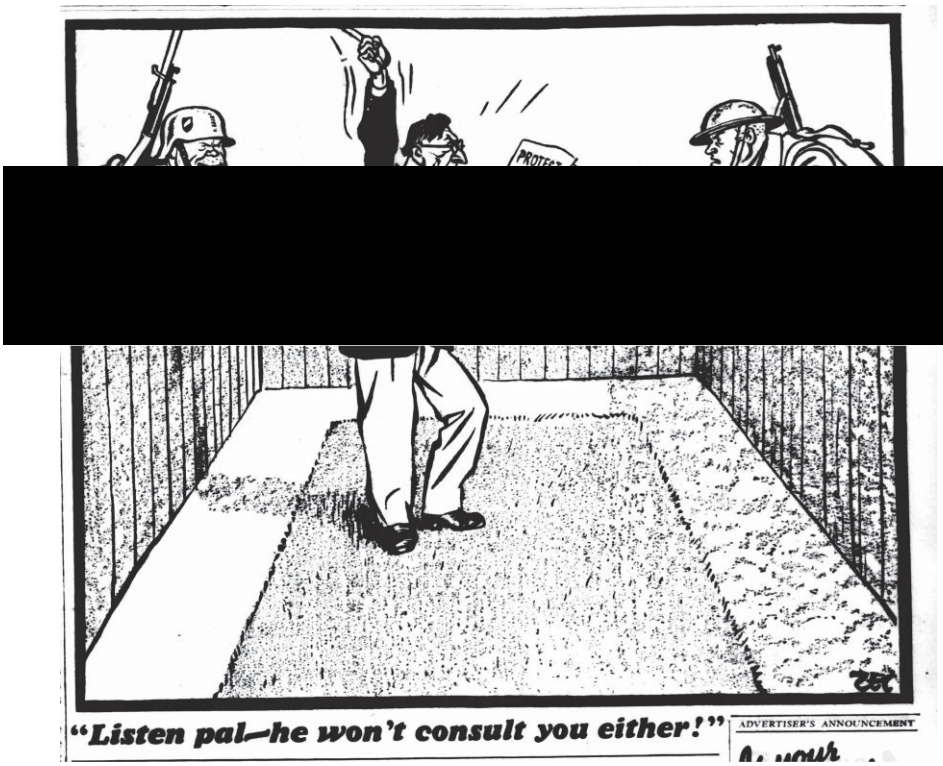


Figure 7: Ireland's binary choice (Daily Mail, 29/01/1942)

threatening that the 'Americans are not inclined to fool with her (Eire) much longer' (*Daily Mirror,* 02/02/1942, p.4). Public opinion concurred that Irish consent was a moot point, regarding de Valera's protest with 'contemptuous amusement' and 'impatience' (4/2/1942, *TNA, INF 1/292*) and disbelieving that assurance that US soldiers were in no way a threat to Eire should be necessary (8/2/1942, *MO File Report 79 - Public Feeling About Aliens*, 1940).

The arrival of American troops also bolstered arguments of Irish intransigence, foolhardiness, and evasion of responsibility by proving Ireland needed to be protected. In fact, US troops had been sent to the place where British Army training had taken place since the first

[30] The Irish felt their situation also analogous to that of Persia, a neutral invaded by Britain without consent.

days of the war, and thus contained ready infrastructure for use by new recruits. It was also expected to prove no problem to the Ulster people who were regarded as loyal enough to welcome US soldiers with open arms, and indeed many were billeted in private residences[31]. Despite several reports that relations between British and American troops and American troops and Ulster locals were strained, such reports were interpreted as minority opinion. According to the Regional HI officers 'there is a total absence of hostility towards the Americans among the civilian population' despite rumour that Americans were saying 'we have come to win the war' and causing street fights (11/2/1942, *TNA, INF 1/292*). An exhaustive MO report on Americans in Ireland reported 'On the whole, American prestige is high…and the Americans are generally liked' but went on to state that the higher pay of the GI's, their alcohol consumption, their 'sophistication' and 'tendency to almost unwittingly look down on the locals, and maybe talk down to them' caused antagonism. This antagonism is excused as being due to ingrained prejudices in the Ulster people, and where the Protestant majority were supportive as these forces as a bulwark against 'the constant fear of Catholic (Nationalist) trouble', and the Catholic minority are 'largely antagonistic' due to the presence of *any* foreign soldiers. Adding that American ignorance of sectarian tensions created a situation where 'vicious' propaganda against them could spread quickly beyond 'the more ordinary and normal-minded approval shown by the majority', the writer nevertheless concludes that 'no-one could have done what the Americans have had to do without generating some antagonism…the amount…is much less than might have been anticipated' (8/6/1942, *MO File Report 1306 - Americans in Ireland*, 1942). Such explaining away of antagonism reflects a tendency to see the Irish people as the cause of the problem while minimalizing the effects of major social dislocation. Though there was also similar evidence of disquiet at the presence of American troops in Britain, alongside knowledge of their affect in Ireland, disquiet in Ireland was explained by familiar cultural expectations of the Irish people. Though postal censorship from NI revealed people were apprehensive at the presence of GI's because 'they are not a bit like our nice British Soldiers (8/12/1942, *TNA, CJ 4/30*) and that others

[31] Though publicity of this fact was regarded, in Ulster, as 'a direct invitation to the enemy to bomb civilians' (11/2/1942, *TNA, INF 1/292*).

were ‘sick of the way this country has kowtowed to America’ (*MO File Report 1481 - Morale Report in October 1942*, 1942), these feelings were often explained as rumour ‘deliberately spread by the IRA’ (4/6/1942, *TNA, INF 1/292*) thereby demonizing the holding of such opinion.

3.9 Northern Ireland and defence

It was also plain that for the British government Ulster was interpreted by many as being the saving grace against a wholly neutral Ireland, with no British bases from which to protect the Northern approaches to Britain. Indeed, in Belfast it was argued that ‘if De Valera had his way…all Ireland would be neutral, disarmed, and helpless’, and that Britain should send in troops to prevent a German invasion with or without Irish consent (9/7/1940, *TNA, INF 1/264*). However, British public opinion on Northern Ireland itself was not so clear. HI reports suggest that attitudes in Northern Ireland were regarded, in contrast with those in Eire, as ‘clear cut’ in their support for the War, even suggesting that the Sectarian divide was closing by observing most there felt ‘Catholicism should not be regarded as evidence of disloyalty’ (28/10/1940, *TNA, INF 1/292*). However, the same report argues Craigavon to be highly criticised and suggests that despite attestations of Northern Irish loyalty, bigotry against the south was occasionally suspected of working against British interests. For some, the undertones of Craigavon’s rhetoric pointed towards greater pride in proving Northern loyalty to the UK, in opposition to Eire, rather than in winning a war in the cause of morality (Woodward, 2015, p. 15). Postal censorship reports certainly reflected that some in NI positively relished the prospect that after the war Eire, ‘Dev. and co. will find themselves on the doorstep (of the Empire), with the door shut on them’, with one writer recording ‘I hope so at any rate’ (8/6/1943, *TNA, CJ 4/30*). One of the first British Forces in NI commanders quickly characterised the leadership of Ulster as being ‘so fanatically Orange as to be almost unbalanced’ and suggested they must compromise with Eire ‘otherwise there is every possibility of Eire…. making no resistance when invaded’ (Huddleston, 14/06/1940, LMHA). Huddleston’s was a minority view, and he was unsurprisingly, within a month, removed to the Governor-General ship of Sudan, but his words show a frustration with

Unionists not unlike that of those as impatient with the Southern Irish. MO diarist #5116 similarly argued that 'English people easily forget' or did not know that in NI 'the Catholic minority are oppressed and no one except the 'mad' Irish raises a voice' (07/08/1941, *MO Diarist 5116*). It often appeared the distinction between the two cultures of Ireland, 'Unionists…hard-headed, realistic, practical; the other, dreamers, idealists, impractical to the point of foolishness…' (Kennedy, 1988, p. 183), often used to assess the motives of all Irishmen, was losing its power with greater familiarity.

Though many Forces personnel in NI reported interactions with the Northern Irish in friendly terms, one found them 'very funny towards us' until the locals realized his unit would not 'do a bit of damage to the town' (Cotter, 1944, IWM). Others were more condescending. One MO diary records a returning soldier describing Ulster people as 'living in feudal times...just one or two big shots and all the rest are a lot of perishing peasants. The writer's assessment that this attitude reflected merely 'good-humoured contempt' (02/1942, *MO Diarist 5236*) perhaps indicates that he had already heard a lot worse attitudes towards the Irish. Others still were openly derisive recounting sabotage and attacks on Forces personnel, confirming NI as 'not all friendly' (31/01/1941, *MO Diarist 5076).* Many may well have agreed with an American pilot who concluded his reminiscences of Northern Ireland with '"Ireland for the Irish" and they can keep it for my part' (Schulze, 1944, IWM).

A British narrative formed resenting continued lack of Conscription in Ulster, and asserting NI was not pulling her weight in the war effort or being obstructive by putting sectarian issues first. Though the first exclusion of NI from the effect of the Military Training Act (1939) was generally accepted, with newspapers arguing, as did the government, that it would cause difficulties out of proportion to the value of the 2000 men involved' (*The Scotsman,* 02/05/1939, p.8), by June the next year HI in Belfast reports 'disquiet' over attacks on the NI government for 'alleged weakness in war effort' causing 'unnecessary alarm' (11/6/1940, *TNA, INF 1/264*). The second time conscription in NI was raised similar reactions emerged with newspapers urging restraint because 'we have enough trouble on our hands far afield without going out of our way

Figure 8: Mules on the same track (Daily Mail, 6/7/1940)

to create fresh trouble for ourselves nearer home' (*Perthshire Advertiser*, 28/05/1941, p.4) 'Apathy', NI governmental 'lack of drive', and sectarianism were blamed for continuing Ulster unemployment in postal censorship reports (1/2/1940, *TNA, CJ 4/30*). NI newspapers carried numerous letters to the Editor refuting such 'weakness', arguing that conscription was supported in NI but denied by the British Government, and bemoaning that the British did not understand NI. One letter decries another which stated 'British workers do not know the difference between Orangemen and the Irish Republican Army' arguing the MOI should inform them (*Northern Whig*, 11/11/1940, p.4). Postal censorship also revealed denial of conscription had made Ulster people that 'if the government does not want or need us, we are just as well where we are' (1/8/1943, *TNA, CJ 4/30*). Indeed, it was clear that some correspondents in Ulster were unafraid to declare that their stand against the South had been instrumental in saving Britain from herself. Alluding to the 1938 Agreement several letters to the press argued 'Where would England be today if she had given Ulster up to de Valera…' and urged Britain to never give up 'her valuable bridgehead in Ireland' (*Northern Whig*, 11/11/1940, p.4). Others spelled out successive British

governments ignoring the advice of Ulstermen and concluded that 'if present distresses do something to counteract English prejudice against accepting Ulster views on Irish matters, it will be of advantage in the future' (*The Times*, 14/11/1940, p.2). One letter argued it was 'only Ulster's foresight in fighting Home rule that has saved Britain' (*Belfast Newsletter*, 15/08/1942, p.2). This blame game continued throughout the war, and parallels, to a large degree, the tendency to blame Eire for her problems, and shows Ulster to blame Britain for hers. It was not unusual to tar Ulster with the same 'Irish' brush when it suited British sensibility, or for Ulster to proclaim her right to self-government from Britain when it suited hers.

Criticism of Ulster, which HI reported 'rather marked at one stage' due to continuing industrial unrest and unemployment, began to decline in June 1942, due to the new NI PM Basil Brooke who had successfully lobbied for more war industries to be located in NI. However, the volatility of public opinion was evidenced by feeling that the traditional total stoppage of factories for holidays in NI was a wasteful extravagance 'in view of the war situation and the urgent need for munitions and supplies' (14/7/1942, *TNA, INF 1/292*), and by reports of visitors to NI feeling 'those blasted Irish drift around in civvies doing jobs that girls are doing in England' (1/8/1942, *TNA, CJ 4/30*). Northern Irish people frequently referenced high unemployment in postal censorship reports (*TNA, CJ 4/30*) and indicated resentment of southern workers deemed to be waiting to take the job of anyone who volunteered for the Forces (8/12/1942, 30/8/1943, *TNA, CJ 4/30*). By 1944 the result of these resentments, a wave of strikes, caused greater British public indignation, with HI reflecting 'irritation and indignation to a state of mind bordering on despair' with the overwhelming majority being against the strikes, regarding the striker's obduracy as a refusal to help Britain (28/3/1944, *TNA, INF 1/292*). Such impatience, and readiness to blame the 'Irish character' for their actions, reflects the same assumptions of 'Irishness' against Ulsterman as against their Southern neighbours.

3.10 BOMBS ON IRELAND

Reaction to bombing of Ireland indicated an ability to turn all news of Eire against the Irish. Initially, the Irish were castigated for avoiding bombing by declaring neutrality, but nevertheless, when bombing occurred, neutrality was also interpreted as the *cause* of this; by *not* being in the war, by *not* choosing a side and by *not* benefitting from British protection, Eire had *brought this on herself* (*Yorkshire Evening Post*, 04/01/1941, p.4). When German planes bombed Dublin in 1941 a newsreel commentator noted this was 'the price to pay for sitting on the fence' (Pathe News: Germans Bomb Dublin, 1941), ignoring that the price of belligerence, as had been proved in Britain, would have been much more of the same[32]. Neutrality was portrayed as a provocative act, that stepping aside was an invitation for bombing, with one newspaper squarely blaming de Valera, who 'for all we know he has no greater desire for German domination than for a return to British rule. He has, however, been going the right way to invite it' (*Western Morning News*, 28/08/1940, p.4). One paper even suggested the bombs fell because Eire had rejected offers from Germany to help regain the Treaty ports if these were taken by Britain, and from Italy that they would 'have the support of the Roman Catholic world if they were attacked' (*News Chronicle,* 13/01/1941, LHMA). A cartoon suggested this was a precursor to invasion and suggested by continuing to refuse defence co-operation both Ireland's were waiting to be crushed (British Cartoon Archive, *Evening Standard,* 30/08/1940) (Figure 9 below). British public opinion was so unsympathetic to Ireland as to blame her for her own bombing. The expedient of relying on Britain for her defence was also interpreted as inviting destruction by British bombs used to drive out the enemy in the event of invasion ('Foresight', 1941). Thus, Eire could not be allowed to think she could have her cake and eat it, and she would be bombed in every eventuality.

Others interpreted the bombings as Nazi 'terrorism' designed to keep Ireland neutral (*Yorkshire Evening Post*, 04/01/1941, p.4), and insisted 'They (the Nazi's) intend to keep her so

[32] HI special report on Eire from a competent observer, confirmed by Postal Censorship reports, argued the heavy bombing of English towns has aroused great feelings of horror in Eire, but the Irish popular reaction was 'look what would happen to us if we handed over the ports' (11/12/1940, *TNA, INF 1/292*).

if they have to bomb every Irishman out of his home to prove it' (*Daily Record*, 01/06/1941, p.9). Others doubted Irish resolve would survive the bombings, with newspapers and public characterising the bombings as designed to 'frighten Eire out of any resistance' (*Dundee Courier,* 01/06/1941, p.2). However, most saw the bombings as proof of an impending invasion, despite the tiny number of bombs affecting only civilian targets. The *Daily Sketch* argued nobody would believe Goebbels insistence that the bombs were British, and that Germany intended to invade Eire to bring the convoys from the States within Germany's reach, now making Eire's position 'a vital and imminent problem' (*Daily Sketch*, 02/06/1941, LHMA). Others similarly over-reacted to 'the recent visits of German aircraft to Eire may be in the nature of reconnaissance' and that the 'country is important in the battle of the Atlantic and the peril is the nature of Germany's need' (*Yorkshire Post*, 09/06/1941, p.2). Popular opinion in Northern Ireland felt bombing 'a test of its reactions, or alternatively an attempt to intimidate de Valera', and even that somehow 'the IRA will exploit the bombs to strengthen the case for union, and consequently the neutrality of the six counties' (8/1/1941, *TNA, INF 1/292*). An MO diary reflects private opinion of the same type that the bombing was 'a preliminary to a quarrel as a pretext for invading Eire. He (Hitler) wants to ring the U.K. round' (3/1/1941, *MO Diarist 5039*).

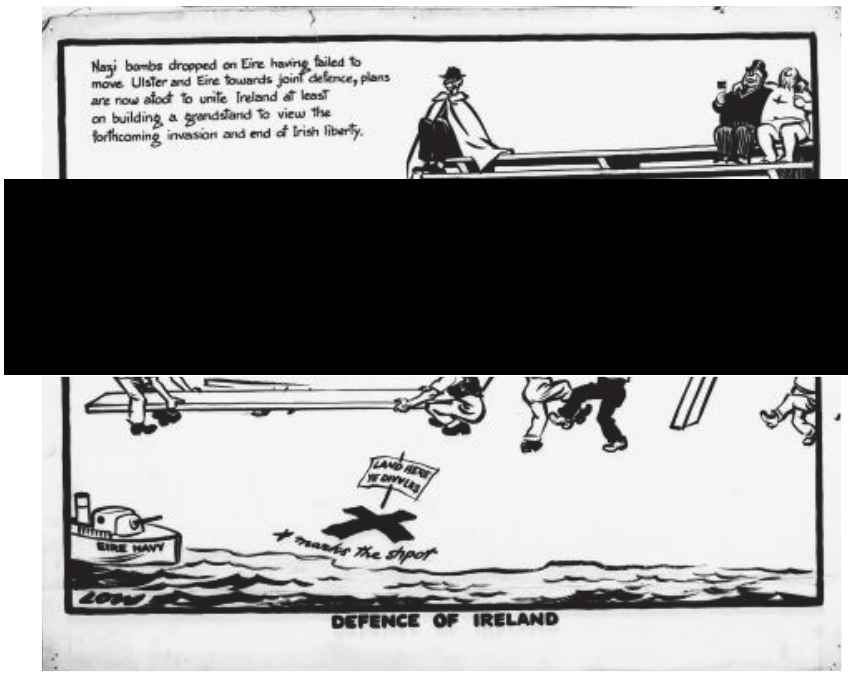


Figure 9: Cross-cultural Invitation to invasion (Evening Standard, 30/08/1940)

Fear of deception or traitorous behaviour by the Irish resulted in little sympathy for Ireland, though it was a neutral nation bombed by Germany like Belgium, Holland, Denmark and Norway, whose bombing was condemned. David Gray, the US Ambassador to Eire, it appears from a reply by Walshe, insinuated that the bombings were not protested loudly enough by the Eire government, thereby leading him to assert the Irish were duped into believing the bombings were accidental. As Walshe subsequently argued the bombings were not condemned as a 'wanton deliberate act because…. such was not the case, (otherwise) the tragedies would have been far greater…' (*NAI, DFA Secretary's Files P48A*, 1941). Though the Irish government successfully gained an apology and compensation for the accidental bombing, caused by Luftwaffe navigational confusion[33], British public opinion, in general, remained influenced by preconceptions and prejudices against Irish neutrality. Newspapers in general interpreted the bombings as at the very least an opportunity to re-assess neutrality and take a side (*Western Mail,* 28/08/1940, p.4). Some opinions were even so antagonistic as to revel in the bombing of Eire; HI reports on postal censorship argue that English, Scotch, Welsh and Northern Irish letter-writers all agreed the bombing a good thing, 'that will teach them to co-operate with us' (2/1/9141, *TNA, INF 1/292*).

Another bombing attack, this time on Rome, was protested by de Valera, on the grounds that, as a symbol of religion and as a sacred city that could never be rebuilt, Rome should be spared blanket bombing by both sides. De Valera's appeal had mirrored that of the Pope, whose appeal, it was considered, would fall on the Germans deaf ears. HI recorded criticism of Mr de Valera's joining in the appeal to spare Rome (4/4/1944, *TNA, INF 1/292*) and MO Diarist #5088 considered the request 'useless' and added the Pope 'should have stopped the war at the start' (13/3/1944, MO Diarist 5088)[34]. Harsh assessments of the appeals by Pope and Taoiseach are

[33] The North Strand bombings in Dublin were subsequently blamed on British attempts to deflect direction finding radio signals ("The Battle of the Beams") used to guide Luftwaffe bombers to their targets (Carter, 1977, p. 85). However, the technology used was not able to deflect the signal from one target to another and could only limit reception (Robert Fisk, 24/01/1999). The bombing of Dublin was therefore accidental.

[34] Some were more sympathetic to the Pope's dilemma. MO Diarist 5116 noted, on the Popes message of condolence to Mussolini on his son's death, 'The average person's idea (in England) of the Pope is queer. They forget that the Pope can only take sides when religion and freedom are assailed' (7/8/1941, *MO File Report 2134 - State Managed Pubs in Carlisle*, 1944).

evident in Irish Postal censorship which revealed divided opinion where some felt it 'a shame bombing such a beautiful and sacred city as Rome no matter what the military objective' but others, echoing the general tone of British opinion, condemned the 'hullaballoo' in Eire adding that this was hypocritical when de Valera had 'remained silent when Warsaw, Belgrade, Coventry, St Pauls, Canterbury etc. were ruined' (8/9/1943, *TNA, CJ 4/30*). MO recorded that most agreed that the appeals were to be ignored when Rome was a legitimate military target, though some admitted sorrow that this was the case, 'only a very few were totally opposed' and 'The Pope's message on the subject had little effect on feeling... (*MO File Report 1882 – Fortnightly Bulletin (13*)). A BIPO poll revealed how far British, and Irish were apart revealing 84.32% approved and 8.03% of respondents disapproved of the bombing (Liddell et al., 1996). For British opinion it appeared the frustration of the enemy topped all other concerns, so much so that raising an alternative opinion was to invite attack or condescension.

3.11 The Treaty Ports

The question of the Treaty ports, within the empire but part of a Dominion legally able to decide their own policy, came to exemplify the problem of neutral Eire in World War Two, but the issue was not initially so divisive. The 1938 Anglo-Irish Agreement was welcomed in general, and few voices, besides Churchill's, remarked on the impact this would have on British Naval defence. However, as war seemed to be becoming inevitable, newspapers began to address the issue, though the ports exact significance proved controversial. By February 1939 newspaper editorials cited an 'awakening to the danger of (the Irish) position in the event of war' but this 'awakening' was not due to fears for British defence, rather the paper argued the cost of the ports was an economic burden that Eire would regret accepting (*Western Morning News*, 18/02/1939, p.8). This writer was less concerned at any danger posed to Britain than the burden they would prove to Eire and did not believe the ports defensively vital.

Indeed, Naval defence and the Treaty Ports were not initially considered problematic by the British government. Maffey initially argued de Valera's 'task will not always be easy, but he

is possessed of tact, common sense, and a welcome freedom from preconceived ideas' (*The Times,* 28/09/1939, p.15). Canning argues that Maffey was initially 'convinced that de Valera was already bending Irish neutrality as far as possible under the circumstances' (Canning, 1985, pp. 249-250) and argued enforced use of the ports would end the passive support of the Irish government and her people (24/10/1939, *TNA, CAB 65/1*). Sanger argues Malcolm MacDonald, sent to try to persuade de Valera to reconsider neutrality, similarly 'considered that Irish neutrality had been very benevolent towards Britain' and appreciated the ways in which Eire gave valuable, secret help. MacDonald later argued Eire would have been immediately invaded by Germany if the ports were given to Britain (Sanger, 1995, pp. 199-200). Maffey's stance would not practically change throughout the war, but frustration changed his attitudes, and those of others, as the war progressed.

Initial military policy on the treaty ports generally fell in line with the Director of Plans at the Admiralty who argued 'the use by our forces of Berehaven and Lough Swilly would be a considerable convenience *but is not vital*…the prohibition to all submarines is acceptable *if effective*. If ineffective it is to our disadvantage' (19/9/1939, *TNA, ADM 1/10366*). It was disbelief that Eire would or could guarantee this protection of their waters which fuelled many assertions that Britain should have the bases at almost any cost. The difference of opinion was also encouraged by the rival conceptions of what the ports represented for each country. The return of the ports, which Churchill described as a 'lamentable and amazing episode' (Churchill, 1948, p. 249), represented for Eire a step towards achieving the country's territorial integrity, but represented for Britain protection of Britain's trade and lifeline to the US. This was of no interest to Eire while she was developing her own economic and political values and could reasonably feed her own population. As Blake argued 'Except under conditions of direct invasion, the strategic interests of Eire and those of the United Kingdom were no longer identical' (Blake, 1956, p. 45). Thus, the threat of invasion brought these differences of significance to a head.

As Blitzkrieg consumed much of Western Europe in the Spring of 1940, the chiefs of Staff committee argued the loss of Berehaven was 'curtailing the range of convoy escorts to the

west' and that 'Irish neutrality works to the advantage of the Germans' (30/5/1930, *TNA, CAB 66/8/13*). The issue was hotly contested at cabinet, as the shock of Blitzkrieg caused many to fear that which they could no longer control in Eire. Though the Germans now controlled the Southern approaches to Britain, and an alternative route through the North channel into the Irish sea was in use (S. W. Roskill, 1954, p. 349), the argument continued. By August the Admiralty argued that because 'these bases being made available is practically entirely dependent on enemy action' but 'a strong possibility of enemy attack on Ireland still exists', plans should be made to consider the Foynes area as a new fleet base (20/8/1940, *TNA, ADM 116/5631*). Clearly, contingency plans had to be made should the tide of war require further action[35] but in September the cabinet dismissed the issue once more because 'the additional military commitment…(required)…simply could not be accepted' (S. W. Roskill, 1954, p. 351). Nevertheless, CIGS John Dill argued the risk of poor relations with an Irish government might precipitate 'all possible action short of open hostilities against us and short of an invitation to the Germans', but that cost of this would be acceptable were Britain to gain the Ports (Dill, 04/12/1940, LHMA). Dill, unable to trust in Eire's ability to handle her own affairs without endangering Britain, found it acceptable to sacrifice Irish sovereignty for doubtful British gain. Governmental indecision and lack of consensus on the Treaty Ports caused repeated flashpoints of fear and uncertainty to arise, and in the circumstances, it was excusable that the Irish often feared the worst[36]. At such a time when fear of invasion was at its height and public opinion was apt to accept that Blitzkrieg had succeeded in part because of Fifth Columnists, it was easy to believe in the perfidiousness and obstinacy, if not stupidity, of a nation popularly believed to be a constant thorn in the side of Britain. That Eire was seeking the best outcome for itself while avoiding loss of sovereignty, was thus perceived as working against British interests.

[35] Martin Gilbert notes that to re-route Britain's Atlantic trade along more secure routes, various bases were under consideration by the Chiefs of Staff, including the Canaries (Spanish), and the Azores and the Cape Verde islands (Portuguese). The Chiefs of staff believed that the 'most valuable base' would be Gran Canaria (Gilbert, 1993b, p. 389).

[36] Maffey asked Walshe if he believed re-occupation by Britain possible, to which Walshe replied '…I felt sure it was going to take place', yet Maffey insisted Britain keep up the pressure on Eire (*NAI, DFA Secretary's Files A2*, 18/10/1940)

The Ports issue came to an early public flashpoint after publication of a story in the *Daily Mirror,* headlined 'Britain Buys Bases in Eire', argued Britain had outmanoeuvred Germany by getting her blow in first and ensuring 'Any plans which Germany may have had for an attack through Eire have been check-mated' after Britain had paid 50 million pounds to regain air and sea bases returned by the 1938 agreement *(Daily Mirror*, 11/05/1940). Archival sources indicate the story was based on rumour which was assumed to be correct merely because it was passed by the censor, but *The Mirror* was informed by the MOI, watchful of the delicate position of Anglo-Irish relations, that it was not the censors job to check the newspapers sources (11/07/1940, *TNA, DO 35/1107/12*) but rather to censor information injurious to security[37]. Though the story was retracted it served to create potential leasing of the bases as a new theme. By July the *Birmingham Post* was suggesting that Eire's budget deficit would be aided by the leasing of Ports (*Birmingham Post*, 08/07/1940, p. 2) and several papers argued that the USA had leased other ports, and this had not affected their neutrality (*Dundee Courier*, 09/11/1940, p.2; *Liverpool Daily Post,* 06/11/1940, p.2), though it was highly unlikely that bases in Canada and the Atlantic, or the USA itself, could be bombed so easily as Eire. *The Mirror* article did not consider Irish neutrality compromised by any lease, while other editorials agreed arguing Britain was merely seeking 'to resume use of two or three Irish naval bases that were hers till two years ago' (*Dundee Courier*, 09/11/1940, p. 2), as if the 1938 Agreement could be abrogated simply by necessity.

The 1938 agreement was also being retroactively recast by some as the first act in the appeasement policies which led to Munich, once more highlighting parallels between Eire and Germany. Editorials and Letters on the 'folly' of the 1938 agreement (*The Scotsman*, 10/07/1940, p.9; 24/03/1941, p.6) connected this to the 'Guilty Men'[38] narrative emerging as a response to the

[37] In an indication of how blasé government attitudes were towards Irish sensibilities at this time Duff Cooper, head of the MOI, argued such articles were undesirable, yet understandable because newspapers 'having sent a special correspondent out to Eire…had to make use of the stuff…brought back with him' (*TNA, DO 35/1107/12*).

[38] 'Guilty Men' (1940) by 'Cato' described Dunkirk as a campaign lost before the troops took the field, who were let down by a generation of politicians who vacillated, appeased, and refused to face up the dangers of the Axis powers. This interpretation was held in by some in the forces – Montgomery later wrote responsibility 'lies squarely on the shoulders of the political and military chiefs in the years before the war…that campaign…was lost in Whitehall…and this cannot be stated too clearly or too often'

disillusionment of the public with the political establishment that supported Appeasement (Evening Dispatch, 03/10/1943, LHMA). Letters cast the ports loss 'a first-class political blunder', 'unwisely surrendered' (*The Scotsman,* 10/07/1940, p. 9) 'without any conditions or guarantees whatsoever' (*The Times,* 20/11/1940, p.5), and 'a capital error' (*The Scotsman*, 06/07/1940b, p.9). Though some papers lamented 'our self-created handicaps…and Eire seems to be in the front rank of them' (*Evening Dispatch*, 03/10/1943, LHMA), most newspaper comment considered only the immediate situation which they felt necessitated the Ports use, despite the invasion of sovereignty this represented. Turning the blame on the Irish *Cassandra* argued a refusal of the Ports was seeking, in the face of an almost invincible, powerful, and immoral enemy, 'a solution in the downfall of the British Empire' (*Daily Mirror*, 07/11/1940, p.4), proving it became more popular to believe Irish stubbornness had created this problem rather than British error. MO at this time recorded 'considerable indignation about Eire's…refusal to allow the use of her ports' merging this opinion with existing prejudices on 'the traditional 'difficultness' of the Irish people' (8/11/1940, *MO, FR 486 - Sixth Weekly Report for Home Intelligence*). One Newspaper represents the most reductive of attitudes by simplifying the Irish position, arguing 'it comes back to the same old story; the Southern Irishmen still distrust the British (and) with customary Irish cussedness they refuse to recognise that our victory is theirs' (*Aberdeen Press & Journal*, 18/11/1940, p.2). By the end of 1940, the belief in Irish 'cussedness' almost totally obscured the possibility that Britain had helped create the impasse over the ports.

It was also increasingly suggested that the Irish were ignoring the threat that blitzkrieg represented. Though the British forces understood that 'demoralisation', due to the psychological effects of blitzkrieg on soldiers, was a vital part of the success of blitzkrieg tactics (Fennell, 2019, p. 112), popular British opinion showed signs that demoralisation had travelled home with the survivors from Dunkirk. The combined losses of the early war, and de Valera's November confirmation that the Treaty Ports would never be given over to any belligerent power, created

(Montgomery, 1958, p. 49). The public tended to agree that their sacrifices were mitigating the mistakes of Thirties' governments (Calder, 1991, p. 125).

the conditions where danger in Eire was so great as to excuse resort to the annexation tactics employed by the enemy. On the day that the *Daily Express* front page story confirmed de Valera had declared that as long as his country remained neutral naval bases would never be handed over to Britain 'in any circumstances or any conditions' (*Daily Express,* 08/11/1940, p.1), MO recorded 'feeling that …if Eire stands up to us we should annex her, as the German's do with small countries which stand in her way' (8/11/1940, *MO, FR 486 - Sixth Weekly Report for Home Intelligence*) and a week later 'a great deal of comment in favour of forcibly taking the ports which we needed…'(15/11/1940, *MO FR 493 - Seventh Weekly Report for Home Intelligence*). While a few noted the refusal a 'tragedy' for Anglo-Irish relations, as well as 'unchristian and unjust' (*Bath Weekly Chronicle and Herald*, 23/11/1940, p.15) most reacted with anger and threat. Churchill deplored the 'complete banishment of the British Navy from Irish territorial waters' and newspapers and readers took up this distaste arguing 'Eire should be told…that we insist upon having the use of these ports immediately (and) in the event of refusal…Eire must be prepared to take the consequences' because 'in fact, though not intent, he (De Valera) is an ally of Hitler, because of the advantages he gives to Hitler and the handicaps he imposes on us' (*Portsmouth Evening News*, 07/11/1940, p.2; 08/11/1940, p.2). One writer more concisely put it that Irish neutrality was 'impossible' and that 'those who are not with us are against us', thus the Irish bases should be taken for the duration (*Yorkshire Post*, 13/11/1940, p.2). Another correspondent, clearly expecting Irish perfidy, wrote 'I hope that we have made it absolutely clear that if he (De Valera) permits a German landing…we should at once…assert the rights so unwisely surrendered in 1938' (*The Scotsman*, 10/07/1940, p. 9). By the end of 1940 it did appear that, as argued by the Irish government, some British newspapers had indulged in a campaign to arouse public indignation at the Irish stance. Indeed, a *Daily Record* news article entitled 'Outcry for Eire Bases Grows' argues that ships attacked off the north-east Irish coasts could have been saved by ships or planes from Western Irish bases but offers no evidence of any 'Outcry' or indeed it's growth (*Daily Record*, 04/12/1940, p. 2). On the same day Sir John Dill, CIGS, suggested to the War Cabinet that Britain should 'have it put about in America that here was America sending us aeroplanes and arms, which were for all practical purposes being sunk by de Valera' (Dill, 04/12/1940, LHMA), an

exaggeration which was adopted by many in popular discourse. A few months later public anger had grown, and at least in one writer, was convinced that refusal to engage in war was 'almost in the same category as an actual attack emanating from Eire territory' (Tuohy, 08/02/1941), evidencing the pervasiveness of the argument it engendered.

Newspapers argued de Valera was wilfully relying on neutrality that was 'valueless without the protection of the British Navy' (*Liverpool Daily Post*, 08/07/1940, p.2). Some argued 'Mr de Valera presumes on our protection (and) rewards it by the rejection of even a business deal' evidencing the flippancy with which some regarded the threat of punitive bombing if Eire leased the ports to Britain (Evening Dispatch, 08/11/1940, LHMA). It was also considered that Eire's security would be increased by British occupation (*Daily Telegraph*, 13/11/1940, LHMA) and some argued Britain was acting with great leniency towards a nation which owed her freedom to Britain and yet 'not lift a finger to help in the only way she could' (*The Scotsman*, 19/03/1941a, p.9). Some also believed a plebiscite would prove the Irish wanted the British back in the contested ports (*Rochdale Observer*, 14/12/1940, p. 2), while others accused de Valera of a 'fear and cowardice' in believing the Irish could not bear the type of bombing attacks that had occurred in Britain (*The Times*, 09/01/1941, p. 7). Yet those with experience of Ireland argued that 'It must be realised that in the minds of people here there is no feeling of having let England down, no admission that England can make demands as of right and justice' (*TNA, PREM 3/128*) and thus it often appeared that what British people thought the Irish believed, rather than what the Irish actually believed, was basis enough on which to form an opinion.

Pressure to allow the use of the Ports, before supposed inevitable German invasion, continued into 1941, with occasional voices arguing that Eire was aware of her situation and was handling it as 'a matter of high national principle' (*Yorkshire Post*, 10/01/1941, p. 2). Indeed, by January 1941 a former US Ambassador to Eire was arguing that de Valera's fine balancing act between the belligerents was working well, would last longer than most thought, and was 'an Irish problem for Irish solution' (*Daily Telegraph,* 12/01/1941, LHMA). However, on the whole opinion on the Treaty Ports generally considered de Valera 'short-sighted and thoroughly

obstructionist' and 'implacable' (*Birmingham Post*, 13/01/1941, p.2) and rumours of impending British troop movements to take the ports persisted (26/01/1941, *TNA, INF 1/292*). The issue was supposedly urgent enough for one magazine to suggest 'a substitute for Air bases in Ireland' the creation of floating 'unsinkable' platforms in the Atlantic off the Eire coast (Anon, 22/03/1941), a solution surely more expensive, if not impossible, to implement, than defending the ports against German *and* Irish opposition. However, towards the end of the year 1941, after postal censorship reports had shown 'very little modification of feeling, however, over the question of 'the ports' in Eire' (26/03/1941, *TNA, INF 1/292*) and that 'the majority of writers are still against' leasing the ports at all (16/07/1941, *TNA, INF 1/292*), MO still reflected the occasional rumour that 'We intend to invade Southern Ireland very soon' (*MO File Report 775 - Morale Reports Fifth Weekly Report New Series - Rumour & Careless Talk*, 1941).

By 1942, and the landing of US troops in Ulster, impatience at the lack of the ports seemed to be still prevalent, and newspapers argued 'the Americans...will certainly display less of that tenderness for which the British are known in their dealings with small peoples' and would soon 'have something drastic to tell Mr de Valera' (*Harrogate Herald,* 04/02/1942, p.5). An exchange of letters in *The Times* shows that the issue of the Ports was still of psychological significance to many despite the lack of progress on the issue and the expectations of action from America. However, correspondents now began to argue more how to apportion blame or to justify the actions of 1938, than the possibility of imminent invasion. Lord Chatfield, First Sea Lord in 1938, put the case that the Treaty Ports were indefensible against a hostile Eire while Britain upheld its continental obligations, and argued the same function could be achieved by 'non-Eire bases, trusting to improved anti-submarine measures and to the longer-range modern destroyers' (*The Times*, 04/02/1942, p.5). Deeply unpopular in government[39], Chatfield's letter prompted argument exemplifying the deep rifts caused by the loss of the ports, but also gave the impression

[39] On the request of Lord Chatfield to use official records for his memoirs, Churchill noted 'No man has more need to fear investigation of his record than Lord Chatfield, who shamefully failed to state the naval case against his giving away the Irish bases. Moreover, he was a sailor who prolonged his official life after he had left the Navy by building up credit with the advocates of appeasement. If it comes to a fight, he is going to get pretty knocked about' (M Gilbert, 1983, p. 1122 footnote).

that Chatfield's argument was now accepted, at least by readers of *The Times*. Immediately, arch-unionist MP Prof. DL Savory, who consistently argued Irish neutrality illegal, reminded Chatfield of the clause in the 1921 Anglo-Irish agreement allowing the use of Irish Ports 'in time of war' and argued if this had not been abrogated 'the neutrality of Eire, with all its dis-advantages, would have been rendered impossible' (*The Times,* 05/04/1942, p. 5). He further agreed that 'the perfectly fatuous abandonment of the ports in Eire has cost us thousands of lives and hundreds of ships' and recalled Ulster's contemporary disgust in 1938 (*The Times*, 09/02/1942, p.5). Other correspondents related an 'immediate improvement in Anglo-Irish relations' due to the return of the ports and as a result 'Irish public opinion is by no means so neutral' (*The Times,* 13/02/1942, p.5). Some argued that other factors, such as the inter-war reduction in the size of the British fleet, had some influence (*The Times*, 13/07/1940, p.5). One stated that Savory had missed the point of the 1938 review that the ports were a liability without Irish co-operation (*The Times*, 11/02/1942, p. 5); 14/02/1942, p.5). To conclude the exchange, former head of the civil service Warren Fisher argued that charges that Chatfield was 'a man of Munich' were 'unfounded' and 'indefensible', and that any charges on the Irish Ports issue 'had been disposed of' (*The Times*, 03/03/1942, p.5). Though this exchange suggested most Times correspondents accepted Britain had made the best of a bad situation, still HI recorded more rumour, perhaps by this time reflecting wishful thinking, that US forces 'are to size the vital ports of Eire when the time for definite action arrives' (27/08/1942, *TNA, INF 1/292*). The level of discourse on the Treaty Ports had greatly diminished by the end of 1942, but the controversy did not by any means die, and where it did appear, it was equally abrasive in tone.

In 1943 it was clear that public scorn over the loss of the Ports had diminished in frequency but not in tone. The Topic does not emerge in HI reports or MO after 1943 but remained an occasional subject in newspaper correspondence. Despite the passage of time proving that Irish neutrality could last, was popular at home and was not an invitation to invade that Hitler could not pass up, occasional voices still argued the loss of the Ports caused lives to be lost in the Atlantic. An unusually vitriolic letter from a 'Torpedoed Shipmaster' to *The Times* related a ships

Captains charge that Eire 'is traitors land' and argues any other British sailor would agree that 'the policy which withholds from us the use of the South Eire bases…has doomed numbers of men to death by exposure…' yet assures the reader his argument is only with the Irish government, not the Irish people, one of which saved his men by sending the distress call (*The Times*, 18/05/1943, p.5). Another writer, not wishing to belittle the sacrifices of the War of the Atlantic, pointed Eire was not traitorous because the Statute of Westminster legalised Dominion neutrality, and because the Ports 'were returned unconditionally' (*The Times*, 22/05/1943, p.5). It seemed that the charge that Eire had effectively drowned British sailors in the Atlantic simply could not be affected by the diminution of attacks on Eire. By the end of the year newspaper correspondents were still confidently arguing that the ports should have been taken 'by force if necessary', and comparing the current war to the previous, asserting that there was nothing to stop the perfidy of U-boat landings 'especially as de Valera is more of an enemy than a friend to us', as if nothing had changed in the inter-war years (*Western Morning News,* 23/12/1941, p.2).

3.12 Conclusions

Though most contemporary British concern was of an impending invasion of Britain, Eire, throughout the war, was considered dangerous for many reasons and at different levels of intensity. The most virulent opinion appears to emerge strongest at times of military setback or diplomatic conflict. In general, British public attitudes were 'expressions of contempt for, and impatience with, the policy of Mr de Valera's government…(with)…very little sympathy for their afflictions, nor any understanding of what causes them' (12/02/1941, *TNA, INF 1/292*). This was also a time when public opinion seemed to lurch between periods of optimism and feelings of helplessness, localised hysteria, irrational behaviour, distrust of government, and characterised by talk of the possibility of a negotiated peace (Mackay, 2013, p. 77). Fear of the unknown made it easier for people to choose to blame other 'enemies' who would provide a safe outlet for anger as well as a soft target. However, this did not mean that the information was not available to dispute that understanding. Despite the problems caused by the need for secrecy created by benevolent

neutrality toward Britain, which Donal O'Drisceoil terms 'the double game' (O'Drisceoil, 1996, p. 292), there is plenty of evidence, publicly available, which would justify a level of understanding of Irelands neutrality. Instead, public opinion often chose to believe the worst of Ireland, de Valera, and the Irish.

Initial public reactions, at the outbreak of war, were sometimes accepting and understanding of Eire's right to neutrality. Reflecting this mood, the British government was determined to push neutrality to its limit to gain concessions for Britain. However, as Blitzkrieg consumed Western Europe, the needs of British defence, while continuing to uphold the values so violently destroyed by the Nazi's conquer, caused no change in her policy, but considerably more vehement argument. Many appeared to believe that Eire would end neutrality in the face of the Nazi's despite repeated evidence that the Irish government was confirmed in its policy and that the Irish people supported it. Public opinion frequently condemned Irish neutrality as no defence thus endangering both islands, some interpreting it as delusional and soon to be proved worthless. Even as it became clear Britain would not be invaded while the RAF was unbeaten, fears over a 'stab in the back' from Irish territory persisted. Anger was at its height in November when a final, unequivocal refusal, under any circumstances, to allow the use of the Treaty Ports by *any* belligerent, was issued by de Valera. As a result, because of annoyance at this apparent suggestion of equivalence between British and German intentions, the problem began to morph towards a binary choice for Eire between joining the war or being invaded by Germany. 'Irishness' had become politicised as becoming everything that the newly emergent Britain did not aspire to, Ireland was becoming Anti-Britain despite ancient and continuing ties. Eire was now considered to be shirking her duty, positively inviting invasion, and by her inaction aiding the German war effort. The threat of invasion was perceived as so high that most saw Irelands geographic advantage of being within the range of British defence capabilities, as no guarantee of safety, which suggests the British public may have worried that their own safety was similarly not assured.

Public opinions on the troublesome Irish did not tend to address the longstanding neglect of the issue of Irish defence by both governments. The fact that the Treaty Ports required repair and modernisation, the cost of which was out of all proportion to their usefulness, as had been argued when they were returned to Irish sovereignty in 1938, was ignored by those who longed for their return. The Irish army was indeed practically defenceless, sparsely armed, and deeply distrusted in Britain, especially those who remembered the 'Tan War'. Though the Irish Defence Forces rapidly adapted to the new need for defence, many British could not accept that these changes were enough, enabling the Irish to defend themselves, and the British and American governments refused to arm the Irish Forces in case those new arms fell into the wrong hands. As the two countries of Ireland could not agree on joint defence initiatives sparked accusations of Eire was using her possible entry to the war as blackmail to regain the North, and Ulster of bigotry and prioritising Ulster above the interests of the UK. Though Eire consistently denied blackmail the impasse over joint defence both proved Ulster's strategic worth and that other tactics might be required to pressurise Eire into change.

It was commonly accepted that Eire was being effectively blockaded, despite the secrecy surrounding governmental policy discouraging oil companies from dealing with Eire, and the control of Eire's shipping with the Navicert system. The unequal economic situation between Britain and Eire was commonly seen as a potential weapon though some argued better economic relations would benefit Britain itself under a German blockade. The public assumed this was being done, as indeed it was, and frequent indications that Eire was 'feeling the pinch' emerged, though the secret blockade only served to push Eire towards more self-reliance, and more extensive state control of the economy. Alongside this assumption many argued that Eire should be forced into acquiescence, by arguing that Hitler would only do the same. Pre-emptive invasion was openly suggested either by British or international troops, and when Eire requested guarantees that this would not happen this was dismissed as 'persecution mania' or indicative of a country turning its back on civilisation. It was also indicative of the British public attitude to Eire that she was blamed for her own bombing, with neutrality being conceptually stretched towards becoming

provocative. Though a few felt the bombings were intended to make sure Eire remained neutral, most argued they were proof of impending invasion, despite their minute impact. It seemed that in British opinion, for Eire bombing was the price of sitting on the fence.

Neutrality for Eire was deemed cowardly or due to hatred of Britain, but American neutrality was generally accepted as unfortunate but valid. The US declaration of war was also interpreted as a stick to beat Eire with as the public assumed the Americans landing in their training bases in the North would takeover Eire. The arrival of these troops was generally taken as proof of Irish perfidy and Irish consent at their landing considered irrelevant. Problems with the assimilation of troops in Ulster were often dismissed as being due to Irish bigotry despite similar problems arising in Britain, where Americans troops were not excused their indiscretions. Indeed, Ulster was not always excused the taint of 'Irishness', with many arguing Ulstermen as troublesome as their Southern neighbours in their efforts to prove their loyalty to Britain whether it helped to win the war or not. The distinctions between the two Irelands, in the British consciousness, were beginning to blur, as the lack of conscription, high unemployment and a wave of strikes in Ulster began to expose the differences between Ulster and Britain. However, in the end, the usefulness of Ulster was proven, and it was rewarded by a commitment by the British government to keep her within the UK.

Controversy over the Treaty Ports came to exemplify most of these attitudes. Initially more understanding attitudes prevailed, allowing that the Ports may have been no more than a financial burden, but Blitzkrieg in the West created expectation that the Irish stance would be adaptive. Military attitudes hinged either on a belief, or disbelief, that Irish precautions against enemy U-Boat infiltration would be effective, or on the strategic indivisibility of the British Isles. Those who disbelieved could neither accept that U-Boats were not operating in large numbers off the Irish west coast or that the Northern Irish ports used by the Royal Navy were, with greater technological innovations and greater intelligence capabilities, able to cover the Northwest approaches to Britain. Those who hankered after the return of the Ports did not adapt to the changing circumstances of the war, so much so that Canning argued, with justification that 'Not

only was the need for Berehaven as a base for the main fleet purely an invention of Churchill's, but, if anything, the need for the Irish ports as bases in the anti-submarine campaign had been diminishing rather than increasing since the outbreak of the war' (Canning, 1985, p. 249). The shock of Blitzkrieg made it possible for the public to believe that Eire would allow the leasing of the Ports to Britain, or America, and that Eire should be forced to co-operate because it was felt militarily necessary. The 1938 Agreement was also slowly recast, in time of need, as the opening chapter in the failed policy of appeasement, an argument which cast Eire alongside Germany as shamefully submitted to, but now Britain's enemy. The Irish were being reviled for taking the course Britain had left open for them, which appeared to endanger the whole of the British Empire and civilisation. As de Valera confirmed the Treaty Ports would not be used by *any belligerent*, the argument turned away from British culpability to Irish idiocy in allowing this position to continue. Refusal to return the ports was also cast as unjust, unchristian, and creating the conditions where Eire should be cast out of the Empire or even invaded for the sake of British safety. Most could not see that this action was equivalent to those actions which were vilified when taken by the Nazi's. Some also felt it was an indication of British leniency in the face of great provocation that Britain did not reconquer Eire.

The psychological impact of the refusal of the Treaty Ports on the British public is hard to underestimate. This was the issue that was argued and reargued over several years of the war, creating great controversy and attempts to blame the Irish for a situation neither of essential strategic significance nor pressing material need. Those who believed the Irish to be effectively drowning Allied sailors by their refusal couched their arguments in terms that reflected their belief that Ireland should never have been given her independence at all. This also provided a precise reason to exclude the Irish from the British national narrative, the myth of Britain standing alone, being formed by the experience of this most all-encompassing war. Nevertheless, evidence indicates that counter arguments to this forming narrative of Irish intransigence in the face of common sense, were available. Indeed, an article in *The Evening Dispatch* argued the Irish case with great clarity, but to little avail, showcasing some of the arguments later proved correct as the

course of the war changed direction towards the East, and pressure eased on Britain. Written by an Irish journalist John T. Grealish this argued the Irish saw no reason to give ‘over the derrick less anchorages called 'naval bases' for propaganda purposes’ (*Evening Dispatch*, 03/10/1943, LHMA).

If attitudes softened over time, it was not, in general, due to a belief that Eire was no longer dangerous to Britain, but more because other developments became more pressing, or the public became more convinced of ultimate Allied victory. High points of controversy coincide with military failure or heightened fear of the power of Blitzkrieg, rather than the assurances of the Eire government that they were keeping the Nazi’s out of Ireland in a way that did not endanger their independence. Though evidence to the contrary was available, it was believed the Irish were anti-British even to the point where they would rather be under the Nazi heel than help Britain. Post war discoveries proved after the invasion of Britain was postponed, the German Navy considered the possibility of an invasion of Ireland ‘completely hopeless’ because there were no defendable anchorages available, including the Treaty Ports, and concluded that using Eire as an arena for military operations ‘was not a viable option’ (Hull, 2004, p. 140).

4 A PLACE APART

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Ireland's constitutional relationship to Britain has often been re-defined, but Ireland always occupied a curious middle-place, politically once a country of the UK, yet culturally a place apart (Fitzpatrick, 1989). Definitions of Irishness concentrated on cultural difference, creating an expectation of what Irish people and their 'character' would be. Binaries of civilised-barbaric, Catholic-Protestant, industrial-pastoral, brave-cowardly, hardworking-indolent, canny-stupid, and moral-debauched had longstanding cultural impact by the time of World War Two, and racialized representations of Irishness still had cultural currency. Yet there was also a cultural expectation that Ireland would come to Britain's side in the event of war, aided by ignorance of the constitutional position of the Irish Free State, now a Dominion able to make her own foreign policy decisions. Ireland was considered by many a part of the Empire at the least, and some considered her essentially still part of the United Kingdom. However, as the war progressed there were many ways in which Ireland was becoming perceived as culturally, politically, socially, different. Irish and British identity was being re-formed and changed by war. Part of this process for the British was a gradual realisation that Ireland was not, or at least no longer, culturally, or politically a part of the United Kingdom. Cultural difference, in the past ignored when it suited Britain, after the war became represented by FSL Lyon's 'Plato's Cave' analogy, which proposed the separation of Irish and British cultures, Irish culture being oppositional, inward-looking and isolationist, and aspirationally opposite to the new Britain being forged by World War Two.

4.2 MO 1939 RACE SURVEY

Questionnaire responses to the 1939 MO 'Race Directive' form a useful baseline from which to track changes in British opinion on Ireland and the Irish throughout the war. Issued in 1939, after the start of the IRA 'S-Plan' bombings, but before the formal declaration of Irish

neutrality, the questionnaire (*MO Race Directive Questionnaire*, 1939) comprised several questions on 'race', some of which related to the Irish. Though the questions were ill-conceived, unsolicited, and additional comments reflect the writer's perceptions. Question two required the ranking of ten 'races' on a preferential scale according to whom respondents 'would prefer the British nation to collaborate or associate with', including Eire, and question three required the ranking of ten national leaders by which was accorded the most 'respect', including de Valera. One respondent commented that 'grading people in order of merit repulses me' (*MO Directive Respondent 1335*, 1939), and several others point out the question's conflation of race and nationality (*MO Directive Respondent 1143*, 1939; *MO Directive Respondent 1318*, 1939; *MO Directive Respondent 1426*, 1939). However, the loose concepts used reflected the imprecise nature of contemporary and historic notions of race, and was, as such, no barrier to similarly chaotic responses. Indeed, one respondent similarly conflates 'race' and 'class' by stating he felt as repelled by 'poor people in England' as he did by 'negroes' (*MO Directive Respondent 1095*, 1939). Such responses indicate that *any grouping of similar people* could be interpreted as a 'race' by many of the MO respondents.

Statistical analysis reveals collaboration with the Irish 'race' scoring 5.l and respect for de Valera 5.4 (Moulton, 2014, p. 317), where one is most favoured and ten the least. These figures provide little insight in themselves, but the additional comments were influenced by a combination of pragmatism and prejudice. One noted collaboration with such a small country would be hardly worthwhile (*MO Directive Respondent 1206*, 1939), but surprisingly, these do not reflect intolerance of the Irish 'race' and only two were antagonistic. The first argues collaboration would not be easy as 'they are so implaccable (sic)' (*MO Directive Respondent 1578*, 1939), and the second rates the Irish 'a miserable tenth, if you [sic] must consider them (my prejudice dates back long before this IRA business)' (*MO Directive Respondent 2200*, 1939). Most commenting respondents considered the Irish to be natural Allies, with a typical response being '…I do not regard the Irish as 'foreign' in any sense' (*MO Directive Respondent 1039*, 1939). These attitudes evidence Clair Wills' argument that many British people saw Eire as being

still somehow British despite gaining Dominion Status in 1922 (Wills, 2008, p. 5). The survey suggests that MO contributors would regret the detachment of Ireland from the Empire.

Some opinions on 'respect' for de Valera are equivocal, seeing him as 'a fanatic but sincere' (*MO Directive Respondent 2187*, 1939). In total eleven of three-hundred and seventy-two respondents rated de Valera in first place and one comment notes he 'seems sensible about peace' (*MO Directive Respondent 1057*, 1939). However, twenty-three unsolicited comments indicated no respect for the Irish leader. A few felt they did not have enough knowledge to comment (*MO Directive Respondent 1040*, 1939) but twenty-one awarded de Valera last place in a list below Hitler, Goering, Mussolini, and Stalin. One wrote 'I class these both (de Valera and Hitler) as fanatical, egocentric fools and personally despise almost every quality I believe them to possess…' (*MO Directive Respondent 1403*, 1939). De Valera had proved himself implacable in his 'anti-British', Irish Nationalism, but nevertheless most expected the Irish people would be more amenable to collaboration. Indeed, respondents saw no contradiction in the same people having elected him. As a constitutional Nationalist de Valera represented a certain danger of secession, not least because of his political history, but still British opinion did not believe the Irish people shared his views.

Despite a few comments to the contrary, the directive reveals that recent IRA activities had politicised Irishness in combination with the Irish states attitude to conscription in Northern Ireland and of its nationals in Britain. Mo Moulton has shown that after the Anglo-Irish War, 'being Irish became a more personal and less political matter…. Irish political traditions were preserved in cultural and nostalgic forms', and thus 'simultaneously more acceptable and yet persistently different' (Moulton, 2014, p. 280). However, by time of the 1939 Race Directive, the 1938-1940 IRA 'S-Plan' bombing campaign and preparations for war, 'Irishness' once more assumed a more political dimension and was later reinforced by the adoption of neutrality. It is this 'politicised' Irishness that is rejected by MO respondents; any expressions of Irishness related to politics, irredentism, an independent foreign policy, or indeed any policies which worked against the interests of the UK, were regarded as a manifestation of cultural perversity. This

attitude was focussed on displeasure at Irish 'disloyalty' to the historical connection between the two islands, despite a marked ignorance of this connection being characterised by violence, colonialism, and religious intolerance. Indeed, as Angus Calder argued, even as late as the end of 1940, 'there is plenty of evidence that the British pubic knew, and by implication cared, very little about the British colonies' (Calder, 1991). Even after a massive MOI 'Empire Crusade' campaign there was 'no significant improvement in the number of people who knew…the difference between a Dominion and a Colony' (*Home Propaganda: A Report Prepared by Mass-Observation for the Advertising Service Guild*, 1941, p. 18).

De Valera was a representation of negative themes of Irishness for many, and his supposed traits combined to place the Irish leader on a level with similarly 'fanatical' European dictators. As Kushner states 'belief in, or more rarely, opposition to, Englishness was critical in formulating and articulating responses (whether positive, negative, or ambivalent) to minorities at home and abroad' (Kushner, 2004, p. 233). This distinction reflects a view that the Irish were not perceived as foreigners, or necessarily racially different, but were merely *politically misled*. The MO race survey indicates that Irish Nationalism was the most distasteful aspect of Irishness to British sensibilities, serving well as a baseline from which to measure changing attitudes towards the Irish in reaction to the exigencies of war. The rest of this chapter will recount transformations after 1939 in strength of feeling, as well as the formation of new antipathies.

4.3 The People Are with Us

Eunan O'Halpin argues 'Eire's neutrality can hardly have been a surprise to those connected with Irish affairs, though the British public and even certain official and political circles may have cherished the illusion that in the event of war with Germany Britain would be allowed to use the Eire ports which had been given up in 1938' (O'Halpin, 2003, p. 28). When it became clear that Eire was pursuing an independent foreign policy, those who felt Eire should support the empire interpreted Irish neutrality as treachery by the Irish government. Throughout the war a

belief that their Fianna Fail elected government misled the Irish people appears mostly in the press and appears to have followed the Churchillian rhetorical intimations that 'three quarters' of the Irish people 'are with us' in the war and it was the 'malignant minority' which de Valera 'dare not …offend' which was keeping Ireland neutral (Gilbert, 1993a, p.143). In June 1940 a Newcastle paper argued 'in recent weeks the Irish people have been awaking to their new menace' (*Newcastle Evening Chronicle,* 24/06/1940, p.4), and a Manchester one that 'It is probable that the large Cosgrave party would welcome the leasing of the bases to Britain' (*Manchester Evening News,* 08/11/1940, p.2) despite evidence that Fine Gael also supported neutrality. By the end of December 1940, when British fears of invasion had declined, fears of an Irish invasion were still current. Even attitudes accepting the relevance of the Irish experience of British rule argued that Irish grievances were best dismissed in the face of Nazi invasion. Though the Irish have 'nursed a genuine grievance against England', one letter writer added, 'The attitude taken up by Mr de Valera during the present crisis cannot for long be tolerated by the Irish people' (*Stirling Observer,* 11/11/1940, p.3), once again believing de Valera was unsupported by the Irish majority. A more direct letter argued 'the vast majority of the Irish people want to be with us' and that 'when 'dev' is drummed out, we will have a real; united, peaceful Emerald Isle' (*Western Morning News*, 02/12/1943, p.2), continuing to deny Irish public supported de Valera despite him having won a general election six months earlier. Before the 1943 Eire election, newspaper editorials had formed a narrative expecting a change in political direction in Ireland, soon proved wrong when de Valera's Fianna Fail remained the largest party represented in the Dail[40]. The media was, however, not party to more reliable information gathered from Irish people and Ireland itself, and this tends to mediate the lack of understanding in the newspaper opinion.

Secret Postal and Telegraph censorship and HI reports revealed Irish writers predominantly supported neutrality and de Valera, which influenced government policy. These also reveal increasing sympathy with Britain, with HI noting that 'Anti-British feeling is less in

[40] Though FF lost seats this was mainly due to a rise in votes for the Farmers Party in protest at the governments wartime regulation of the farming industry. Since all parties supported continued neutrality, the election could hardly be considered a vote on the question.

evidence,' (24/12/1940, *TNA, INF 1/292*) at the end of 1940. By 1941 reports note that this support did not equate with desire to join the war and concede that 'There is very little modification of feeling, however, over the question of 'the ports'' (26/3/1941, *TNA, INF 1/292*). Reports stress continued support for de Valera's stance before and after the 1943 election, with one writer arguing 'I hope they put Fianna Fail back again.... De Valera kept us out of the war anyway' (8/6/1943, *TNA, CJ 4/30*). A 1942 survey of letters from Britain to Eire, most likely from Irish immigrants living in Britain, revealed 424 out of 521 letters comment favourably on neutrality (1/2/1942, *TNA, CJ 4/30*), and a 1943 comment argues that no leader 'would get much support…in going into the war'. Clearly the Irish people valued peace above plenty with the secret blockade[41] having little effect on Irish opinion, with one writer noting 'We are short of almost everything.... (but) what we have is peace…' (8/1/1943, *TNA, CJ 4/30*). There is, however, some evidence indicating the vehemence of anti-neutrality opinion in Britain with one report relating a current joke in Britain asserting 'that all the yellow races are in the war now except Eire' (1/2/1942, *TNA, CJ 4/30*). A February 1942 report highlights a telling opinion that 'Ireland, when she enters the war, will do so as an independent and separate sovereign state, following her own destiny' which insightfully explains the assertiveness of sovereignty which formed a basis of Irish motivation (1/2/1942, *TNA, CJ 4/30*), an argument frequently brought to the attention of the British government by volunteer commentators in, or visiting, Eire.

These volunteer commentators reports sent to government from those who knew Ireland, tend to support the conclusions of the Postal censorship reports. These argue the majority had faith in neutrality, and that to believe otherwise was wishful thinking. A.A. Mowat, a British teacher who spent her summers in Eire, wrote in April 1942 that 'The people as a whole, Anglophile, or otherwise, regard active participation in the war as out of the question' (*TNA, DO*

[41] Lord Cranborne had suggested to the War Cabinet 'Quietly, un-ostentatiously, without any public declaration of policy, we should employ every method in our power to keep her (Eire) lean…. what would be the result of such a policy...it would tend to weaken his (de Valera's) hold on the Irish people…' (TNA, PREM 3/128). This was imposed through refusing space in British supply convoys that had been previously used for imports to Eire.

130/28), and 'JS' reported that in September the Irish government had 'successfully created an 'idée fixe' in the minds of the population that neutrality is an assurance against the hardships of war' (*TNA, DO 130/28*). Notes on Eire, sent by Anglo-Irish novelist Elizabeth Bowen under her married name of Cameron, as Fisk notes (R Fisk, 1985, pp. 411-412), report 'Support of Mr. de Valera's policy of neutrality is general in almost all classes and is impressive... (and Irish) neutrality is identified with her integrity. In fact, neutrality = (sic) Independence' and that 'Eire regards her declaration of neutrality as a positive act...an act of strength, not weakness' (13/7/1940, *TNA, DO 130/28*). These writers reported widespread support for de Valera's government and neutrality in all classes. Of these reports, sent to the DO, only one writer was asked to contribute such a report and the others provided information of their own volition. The DO felt this information useful in all cases, and the records indicate that these reports were read by ministers of state. Elizabeth Bowens reports were particularly useful to the British government because of the political circles she had access to. Her personal knowledge of James Dillon, the only anti-neutral politician in the Dail, whose dissenting opinion was only barely tolerated, revealed the strength of pro-neutral feeling. Bowen reported him to be able but 'very much disliked' (9/11/1940, *TNA, DO 130/28*) and 'the enfant terrible of the Cosgravites' (9/2/1942, *TNA, DO 130/28*), with a 'reputation of being a war-monger' even after his resignation from Fine Gael (31/7/1942, *TNA, DO 130/28*). Visiting Australian historian W.K. Hancock wrote 'The Government is neutral, but the people are by no means neutral', but added the vital proviso that he estimated 85% 'though in thought and speech pro-British, does not feel called upon to make any real effort in our support' (16/11/1942, *TNA, DO 130/28*). Other intelligence sources had noticed changing opinions which they could only grudgingly accept. The Admiralty 1941 report on 'Quisling's in Eire', indicated 'a great change' from previous opinion with 'everyone pro-German and confident that Britain would lose the war', but attributed this change to Irish opportunism and that 'the popular side in Eire is the winning side' (14/01/1941, *TNA, ADM 22/3486*). Even when the Irish were perceived as changing to the right opinion it was attributed as being for the wrong reasons.

These sources indicate the British government had reliable evidence that the Irish people not only hoped for an Allied victory, but also agreed with de Valera's policy of neutrality. However, this conclusion was often negatively interpreted as an expression of the paradoxical nature of the Irish people, an interpretation based on cultural antipathy rather than the available evidence. These sources probably helped to create a cautious consensus in the War Cabinet that forcing the issue of the Treaty Ports would be counter-productive unless circumstances of war made their use necessary. It is frequently obvious that this consensus was held only grudgingly and is often qualified with a witheringly condescending interpretation of Irish motivations.

Though the British wartime press was not subject to censorship, except where matters of military security was concerned, it was useful to the British government that the true state of public opinion in Eire was not widely known so that it kept up pressure on Eire to allow the use of the treaty ports. However, the fact that some papers came to similar conclusions than those in the censorship reports through their own research, shows that some papers were perhaps pursuing a political agenda by representing Irish neutrality as unpopular in Eire. Indeed, the Irish government complained to the British Government of a press campaign to malign Irish motivations. Rare dissenting opinions included a *Times* editorial arguing the 'widespread and sincerely held' belief that Ireland would be bombed if the Treaty Ports were used by the Royal Navy and held that this 'explains the paradox that many convinced neutralists are to be found now serving in the crown forces' (*The Times*, 28/04/1942, p.5). Further a *Daily Herald* article argued, unusually, that the 'Irish people are not "loyal" or "pro-British"' and 'there is no special reason why they should be' (*Daily Herald*, 08/08/1939, p. 5) and a notable letter to the Editor argued 'the present government in Eire was elected by the people, and the same people are thankful for neutrality', sagely adding 'why should there be bloodshed in Ireland when it can be avoided?' (*Birmingham Gazette*, 07/06/1945, p.2). A few commentators seemed to believe the Irish stance was not one-dimensional and was a reasonable response in her circumstances.

However, the great majority of newspaper comment relied on a narrative that the Irish were being misled and readers were left unable to understand nuanced Irish motivations,

preferring to believe in simpler binary choices. This attitude tended to become more entrenched as the war progressed and by 1944 HI reports revealed that 'outside Northern Ireland the results of the Eire election excited almost no interest…though there was some surprise at Mr de Valera's increased majority' (8/6/1944, *TNA, INF 1/292*), suggesting that if there had been more interest in Ireland this would have been less of a surprise. After the June 1943 election the narrative of the Irish people being misled did not disappear but mutated to focus on the large number of Irish volunteers in the British Forces, which was often publicly upheld as evidence that at least these Irish people rejected de Valera's neutrality. A letter to the Editor effectively divides the 'honourable' and 'dishonourable' Irish, charging de Valera with casting the Irish race 'as nothing better than Nazi champions', yet 'Irishmen of decency and pride did not let her down, and never will' (*Birmingham Mail,* 19/05/1945, p.3). From these sources it is apparent that common attitudes were reflexive and adaptive to circumstances and allowed for a device with which to separate the 'good Irish', that is those helping Britain, from the 'bad'. However, antipathy for the Irish over neutrality cannot be entirely separated from historical and cultural antipathy present in British culture for hundreds of years, which predisposed British opinion towards hostility.

4.4 THE IRISH CHARACTER

The question of Irish neutrality was not solely responsible for public perceptions, with attitudes also being affected by cultural antipathy to foreigners in general, and the Irish in particular. An MO File Report 'Public Feeling About Aliens' notes attitudes to all 'foreigners' are 'at least apprehensive' and that this was 'to a very large degree about, for instance, the Irish…' (*MO File Report 79 - Public Feeling About Aliens*, 1940). The same report concludes that 'If you ask people what they think about 'foreigners' you establish an immediately unfavourable attitude… which could easily be converted into stronger antagonism or stronger favourability' (*MO File Report 79 - Public Feeling About Aliens*, 1940). Such feeling reserves the right for the holder to change his or her opinion according to how closely the foreigner conforms to British values and concerns. Perceptions were changing by April 1940, when 'Ordinary people regard

the Irish as a race at least as separate as the Germans, and there is much potential hostility towards them' (*MO File Report 79 - Public Feeling About Aliens*, 1940). By November the same year many were 'in favour of forcibly taking the ports' (15/11/1940, *MO FR 493 - Seventh Weekly Report for Home Intelligence*).

It was natural for some in the civil service to assume that 'the Irish people as a whole are probably more suggestible than the other peoples of these islands…They will, in fact, accept anything they are told (within limits), provided they are told in the right way, are told it often enough and do not hear too much of the other side of the case' (*TNA, DO 35/1011/3*)[42]. The commander of British forces in Northern Ireland similarly opined 'the Irish are like the Germans…they lack civic pride and courage…are venal, …fundamentally dishonest…vulnerable to propaganda' (*TNA, DO 35/1011/3*). Indeed, the Irish government legal advisor forecast this kind of cultural antipathy by his expectation that if Ireland were 'loyal', 'we might be expected to insist on our pound of flesh in Ulster at a very awkward time', repeating the common conception of Ireland in World War One, that the 'Irish cannot be trusted' and would 'always have a grievance', using the war to blackmail Britain over NI (*NAI, DFA Legal Adviser's Papers*, 16/09/1939). As a result of such attitudes many British appeared to regard the Irish as unappeasable. However, one perceived fault in character was blamed more than all others for neutrality: that of Irish behaviour being paradoxical and nonsensical.

The Irish 'character' was often expected to create the deepest paradox. This was typified by Elizabeth Bowen's 'Notes on Eire' 'the wish of the main body of Irish people is to see England nearly beaten *but not quite' (14/8/1940, TNA, DO 130/28)* and a *Daily Express* 'William Hickey' column records a 'Current Dublinism: Eire wants to see Britain beaten *provided Germany doesn't win*' (*Daily Express*, 09/04/1941, p.4). A similar joke was syndicated in newspapers, emphasising the paradox of Irish people in the British Forces by presenting two Irish RAF crew discussing de Valera while flying through German flak, with one concluding 'Well, there's one thing that can

[42] Strict Irish censorship measures played into such fears.

be said for de Valera - at least he's kept us out of the war' (*Forfar Dispatch*, 30/03/1944, p. 3). Such jokes implied at least naivety, if not ignorance on the part of Irish people, and even that they were confused by their own country's stance[43]. Occasionally, the perceived contradictions inherent in the Irish character were used in the most blunt and puerile commentary, such as a Birmingham Gazette cartoon portraying supposed Irish post-war preparations, in which de Valera panics that he has no rifles when the war is nearly over (*Birmingham Gazette*, 03/10/1944, p.2).

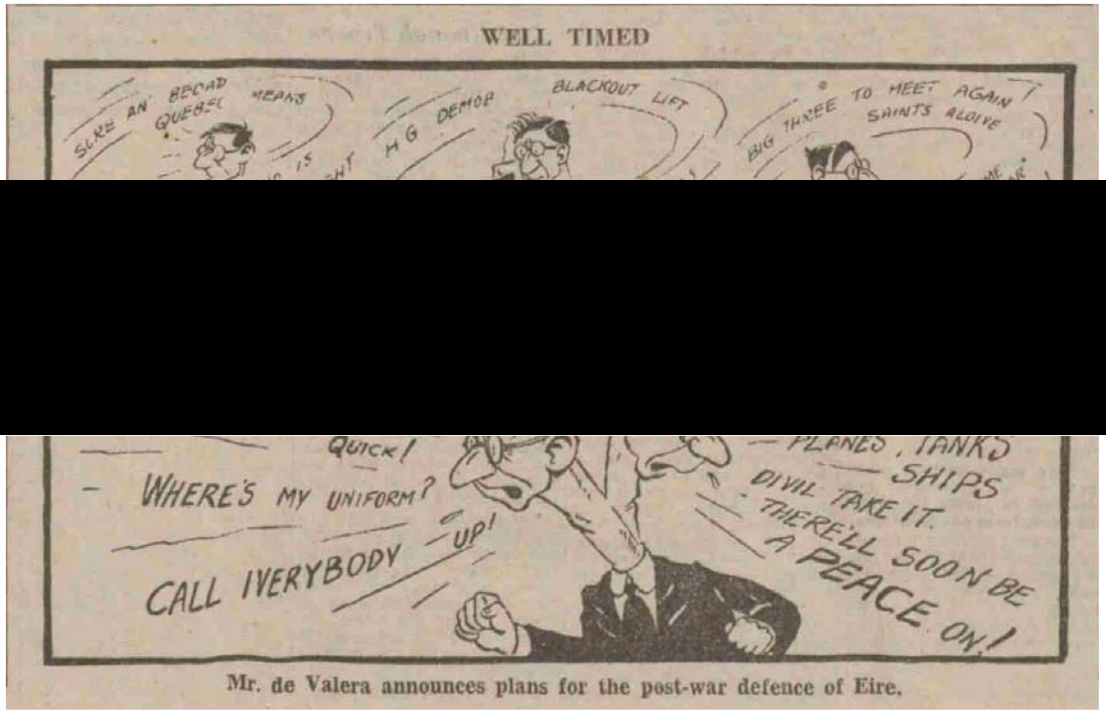


Figure 10: Timely Action (Birmingham Gazette, 03/10/1944)

The old charge of internal division and intrigue among Irish nationalists was also rehashed to portray the Irish stance as doomed to failure, when a magazine reminded readers of the failings of the 19th century Fenians '…wherever two or three Irishmen are gathered together in the name of conspiracy, there is the informer in the midst of them…. Which is why Irish conspiracies always fail…somebody always knows which side pays best' (Grey, 18/01/1941).

[43] A Liverpool Echo 28/03/1944 Letter to the editor, from an Irish immigrant to Britain, suggests 'Don't try to understand us. Hell, we don't even understand ourselves'. This shows the stereotype was so strong as to be accepted by the Irish themselves.

Such portrayal exemplifies not only paradoxical 'Irishness', but also suggests the Irish would, by their nature, be the architects of their own downfall.

4.5 IRISH VS BRITISH VALUES

However, new attitudes towards the Irish were being formed alongside a re-evaluation of what it meant to be British during this period of trial. The MO report 'What does Britain mean to you?' (*MO File Report 878 - What Does Britain Mean to You?*, 1941) is packed with portrayals of the British which lionise 'British values' such as 'freedom of speech', 'freedom of thought, opinion, religion and action', 'home and the good things in life', 'settling of problems peaceably', and 'tolerance and good humour'. Here the British character is one of positive values, and its shortcomings are the harmless inadequacies of a well-meaning 'Nation of Muddlers', reflecting common conceptions of why Britain was fighting the Nazi's (*MO File Report 878 - What Does Britain Mean to You?*, 1941). Elsewhere in MO opinions on the Irish character are less indulgent. Indeed, prejudicial statements unexpectedly appear in reports on seemingly unrelated subjects, proving an ingrained cultural bias. The historically common charge of Irish indolence is in evidence in a report on 'Reconstruction' where 'Two Irish Girls…smoked, idled…refusing to work' (*MO File Report 1485 - Reconstruction IV*, 1942). Familiar accusations or Irish drunkenness appears where the absence of Irish drunken 'navvies' is used to mitigate against state control of Pubs (*MO File Report 2134 - State Managed Pubs in Carlisle*, 1944), and their harmful presence, drinking methylated spirits, appears in a report on Anti-Semitism in London (*MO, FR A12 - Anti Semitism Survey*, 1939). A report on 'Neighbours' charges the presence of Irish people with lowering living standards (*MO File Report 1456 - People's Homes*, 1942), while the charge of the Irish living in filth appears in 'Refugees' (*MO File Report 174 - Refugees*, 1940), where Belgians refugees fleeing the Nazi's purportedly showed traits supposedly similar to Irish behaviour. In these reports, there is indication that not only certain prejudices are associated with the Irish, but these have also become truisms, a cultural shorthand to uphold newer prejudices.

In the formation of a new conception of Britishness, ideas of Irishness were being cast as oppositional. Precisely because the Irish were not in a war creating great social and cultural change in Britain, the 'Irish character' was cast as unchanging, negative, and intentionally obstructive. Refusal to grant use of the former Treaty Ports is 'associated with the traditional 'difficultness' of the Irish people' (*MO, FR 486 - Sixth Weekly Report for Home Intelligence*) and 'regarded as typical senseless Irish pig-headedness, if not downright treachery' (*MO File Report 569 - Airmen*, 1941). There is little attempt here to understand Irish motivations, and obstructive behaviour as seen as enacted intentionally impede the traditional enemy or for no reason at all. Morale reports argue there is 'continued criticism of the Irish, particularly on the line that the Irish always make trouble' (15/11/1940, *MO FR 493 - Seventh Weekly Report for Home Intelligence*), and a diary reports opinion that 'The Irish are a nasty quarrelsome lot, anyway' (22/02/1942, *MO Diarist 5010*). A particularly vitriolic opinion on Irish 'duplicity' asserts the 'Irish in general are regarded as superficially 'charming' and glib, but as basically a bunch of thieves, idlers, drunkards, ne'er-do-wells, boasters and liars' (*MO File Report 569 - Airmen*, 1941). It was also felt by some that the Irish were defeatist, and this was bolstered by the opinion of one of those regularly reporting to the DO on opinion in Eire, who commented on the 'returned Irish' workers that they were 'great carriers of defeatist rumours' and that these 'stories of disaffection in British factories' were 'quoted (here) as authorities' (E. Bowen, 2009, p. 54). A direct comparison between Britishness and Irishness is made in reaction to the Liverpool Blitz, relating one woman's opinion that 'I think it's those wretched Irish trying to create panic… They are going around shouting 'stop the war' and 'we've had enough'. English people wouldn't do that' (*MO File Report 706 - Liverpool*, 1941). Such reactions beg the question; did the British character deem wanting to avoid death by bombing irrational and cowardly? If this were the case or not, it was plain that most considered the Irish were just not made of the same stuff as the British.

Despite her being involved in the war, there is evidence in MO that British opinion saw the Northern Irish as having shared characteristics with their Southern neighbours. As 'Ulster Shipping Situation' succinctly states 'Everything in Ulster is intimately mixed with the religious

dichotomy which divides the country…', and 'this division is…closely linked to all security problems', inferring that government in the province was most invested in deterring IRA and Nationalist irredentist activities rather than prosecuting the war. Emphasising lack of conscription and Ulster's distance from the effects of war the report concludes 'Ulster is in the war, (but) psychologically it is not fighting it. It is only helping to fight it …Even the Blitz on Belfast has not really awakened the people… the slackness in the atmosphere is unmistakeable…' (*MO File Report 1309 - Ulster Shipping Situation*, 1942). Ulster's loyalty is seen as qualified and its self-interest draws some parallels with Eire's neutrality, where Ulster is considered British but *not quite British enough.* Similarly, public opinions in MO suggest that Northern Irish people are 'foreigners', within the United Kingdom. Indeed, this research did not find a single statement, which distinguished if a person identified as 'Irish' was from the North or from the South. There is no sustained evidence of a belief in a separate Ulster identity. Though three female immigrant workers are reported as having connections with Belfast (*MO File Report 1344 - People in Production*, 1942), and may have been Northern Irish, this is not confirmed, leading to the conclusion that for those who contributed to MO, both Northern and Southern Irish were universally 'Irish'.

Whether attitudes towards the Irish were motivated by misunderstanding, ignorance, the supposed Irish 'character' or rejection of the Irish stance, the effect was often the same; that despite evidence showing Ireland was not acting as an enemy, it was easier to believe that she was. In a syndicated article J.L. Hodson investigates 'the Riddle of Eire' and finds that 'I have not found anybody who…would act in any fundamental way different from the manner in which Mr de Valera is acting'. The article begins by noting that before leaving a friend said to him 'I suppose you are visiting what is really a hostile country' and debunks common myths such as the reported hundreds of Germans attached to their legation in Dublin and the rumours of U-Boats being refuelled in Irish waters (*Newcastle Journal*, 03/02/1941, p.4). Hodson did not write if his friend's opinion was changed, but it is certain that most British people saw the 'Irish character'

as an indicator that the Irish did not share British values, and repudiated British political and cultural influence.

4.6 Long Memories

Nationalism and self-determination had become the most important aspect of Irish politics, and yet for many British commentators the new policy of neutrality displayed a continuation of obduracy in the face of British guidance, a product of short-sighted self-interest and enduring historical animosity, rather than a reaction to centuries of over-lordship, or less still a policy that could keep Eire out of the war. Though some attitudes conceded that Britain had done some injustice to the Irish, most believed they should forgive and forget and look to the future rather than the past. Blaming the Irish for bearing grudges the *Portsmouth Evening News* editorial 'Blind Ireland' portrays Irish neutrality as an 'immobilization of Britain's Western flank simply because of an ancient (and, by now, very tedious) isolationist mood born of hard times long ago' (*Portsmouth Evening News*, 13/07/1940, p.2). Other papers asserted that many Irish people, because of their ancient grudge, 'would rather submit to Nazi domination than see a single British soldier or sailor on their shores' (*Manchester Evening News,* 08/11/1940, p.2). Several editorial opinions of this type appear in connection with Cromwell, many of which suggested that 'The jackboot of Hitler will make a far deeper imprint in Ireland than the heel of Cromwell ever did' (*Sunday Express*, 06/04/1941, p.4). Politicians also noted a historical basis to many of de Valera's arguments for neutrality, with Canadian Prime Minister McKenzie King reported as being unable to 'get him past the Battle of the Boyne' (*Newcastle Journal,* 29/01/1941, p.4), whilst Maffey openly considered the Irish 'a vendetta-minded people' (*TNA, CAB 21/1843*). Further, the British Council justified its exclusion of Eire from its list of Neutral nations where it would continue its 'soft power' mission, by weighing up 'the risk of expenditure…on nothing more valuable than the entertainment of a hostile nation' (TNA, DO 35/21011/3), displaying an attitude that the weight of history was not only an annoyance, but was also felt impossible to overcome.

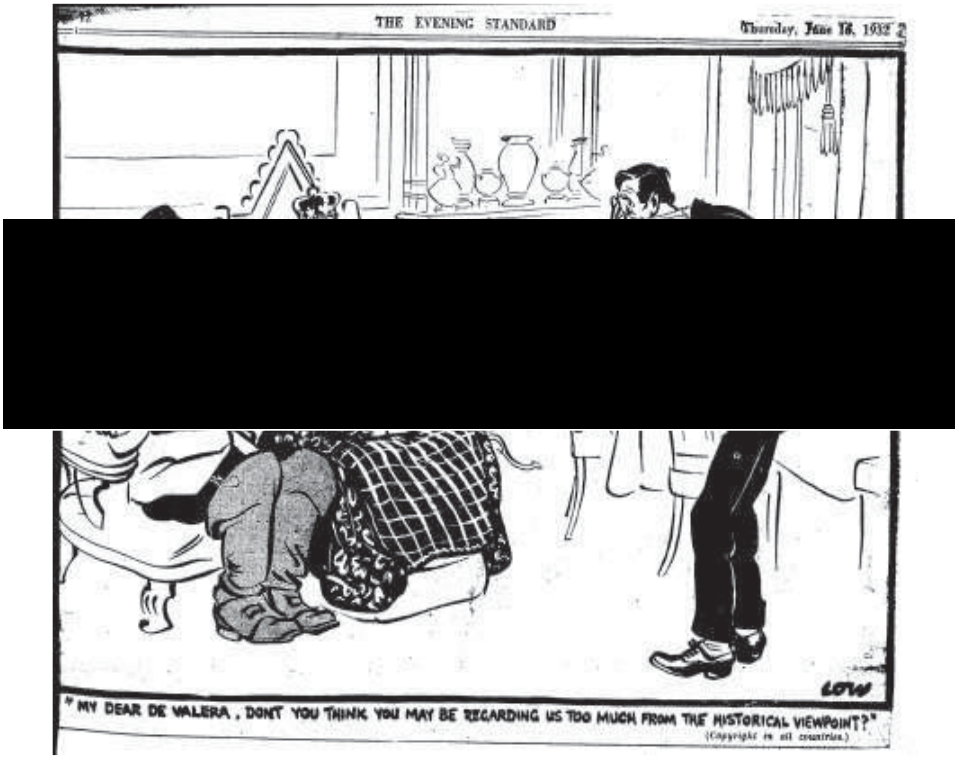


Figure 11: Living in the Past (Evening Standard, 30/08/1940)

HI reports also reflected a perception that the Irish were only able to look backward rather than to the future, and blaming this on irrationality, grudges, and racial characteristics. A 1944 report concludes that only a small minority in Scotland, mostly Irish immigrant workers, understood de Valera's views 'usually raking up past history as justification' (14/13/1944, *TNA, INF 1/292*). Reports even from early in the war argued that British people felt 'It is useless to expect rational or logical thought or sentiment in Eire. The historical, the religious, the mythical, and the frankly ridiculous continually obtrude themselves' (24/12/1940, *TNA, INF 1/292*). The Irish stance was 'emotional' rather than 'logical' and could only be understood 'if allowance is made for historical and emotional actors, together with a certain racial perversity' (2/1/1941, *TNA, INF 1/292*). Few, of course, made these allowances. It was also asserted that in the past the Irish had taken advantage of British munificence and had interpreted this as frailty. Reporting to the Dominions Office on public opinion in Eire, 'JS' charged that heretofore 'generosity' shown to the Irish by Britain had 'been treated as signs of weakness and accordingly despised' when in fact measures by Britain 'were tokens of expedience' (30/9/1942, *TNA, DO 130/28*). However, some British commentators who had visited Ireland counselled against discounting the impact of history

on the Irish. Professor Hancock argues, that from the point of view of Irish history neutrality 'possesses strong validity' because 'we are still too close to Easter 1916, and the succeeding troubles to expect to find a united Ireland fighting on our side' (9/11/1942, *TNA, DO 130/28*). Elizabeth Bowen acknowledged the tide of anti-Irish feeling but encouraged a spirit of compromise writing 'I could wish some factions in England showed less anti-Irish feeling…The charge of "disloyalty" against the Irish has always, given the plain facts of history, irritated me. I could wish that the English kept history in mind more and that the Irish kept it in mind less' (9/11/1940, *TNA, DO 130/28*). A.A. Mowat also argued the future was being risked by both attitudes to the past; 'The chances of political rapprochement between Britain and Eire seem slender at the moment: the British know too little, and the Irish remember too much' (30/4/1942, *TNA, DO 130/28*).

MO shows public opinion on the supposed Irish attitude to the past emerging in a diarist's book review, which interprets *An Irish Journey* by Sean O'Faolain as a 'display of the mentality of an Irish nationalist…Nothing English is good, and he rakes up all kinds of traditions to inflame the national spirit' (08/10/1941, *MO Diarist 5076*). MO File report #569 'Airmen' contains a remarkable assessment of feelings of this type, and its writer concedes 'I have been amazed by the amount of feeling which manifests itself against the Irish'. It continues, 'although there is fairly wide recognition that Britain, in the past, committed some sort of crimes against Ireland, there is (a) practically no knowledge of what form this crime took… (and), (b) in any case all this is regarded as completely finished and done with - Ireland is now free and has nothing to complain of…(and) (c) …the Irish are regarded as a wild and thriftless lot, unfit for self-government, who probably only had themselves to blame' (*MO File Report 569 - Airmen*, 1941). This attitude existed alongside different attitudes to those citizens of Eire who had volunteered, and gave their lives, in the British Forces. American soldiers in Northern Ireland were, according to an MO report, officially warned that the Northern Irish Nationalist was 'highly suspicious and over sensitive, as the result of centuries of trouble' but also reports Nationalist and Unionist predispositions are a reality for the Northern Irish as '*illogical and ill-informed as they may be'*

(*MO File Report 1306 - Americans in Ireland*, 1942). The implication of such advice was that the Irish inhabited a world of grudges, disinformation and illogical fears somehow connected to a past which was long gone, and a world aloof from that being faced by the belligerents. However, when British commentators mentioned the past 'betrayals' of the British by the Irish, these historical arguments were not deemed illogical or ill-informed. A 1940 HI report asserted fears that 'another Casement plot is being hatched' and used this to explain a 'Deep and growing distrust of Eire' (24/6/1940, *TNA, INF 1/264*).

However, a more liberal assessment of Irish motivations, while noting that 'there are illiterate peasants on the West coast of Ireland, who will indignantly ask a harmless English tourist how he justifies Strongbow's invasion of Ireland', concludes that 'History is the cause of all the trouble and it is the curse of Ireland'. The same article relates that 'Unfortunately England has forgotten, and so does not understand why Ireland remembers' (*Wells Journal*, 24/02/1939, p.2) correctly anticipating that most public reaction to Irelands history would be dismissive of the mistakes of the past and would therefore interpret Irish policy as a self-inflicted wound. Others, such as Malcolm McDonald, after agreeing that the Treaty Ports were rightly given up in 1938, was, by 1941, bored by the Irish, regarding her neutrality a product of 'her dull, unending grievance against us' (Nicolson, 1967, p. 186). As Oliver McDonagh has noted, a fundamentally different view of the relevance of the past, a deeply Christian belief that morality is timeless in Ireland, and a Whig conception of progressive history in Britain (MacDonagh, 1992, pp. 6-7), culturally destined the Irish to remember and the British to forget.

4.7 De Valera

Diarmaid Ferriter characterises de Valera during World War Two as mixing 'public stubbornness with an informal pragmatism (in) assisting the Allies' because he knew there was 'no such thing as absolute neutrality' and wanted to 'avoid divisions in the body politic' (D Ferriter, 2007, p. 256). It was a tightrope walk that he took so seriously as to deal with as both

Taoiseach and Minister for External Affairs. But for the British the Taoiseach personified the worst of the Irish character for many British commentators, becoming the ultimate example of the Irish obsession with the past. Newspapers asserted that he 'still wears black for the comrades killed in the 1916 rebellion' (*Daily Express*, 28/05/1943, p.2) whilst displaying a great 'capacity for remembering old scores' (*Perthshire Advertiser*, 27/11/1940, p.6). No doubt influenced by such commentary an MO diarist similarly wrote 'de Valera thinks of nothing but what Cromwell did to his grandfather' (13/3/1944, MO Diarist 5088). British newspapers often portrayed de Valera as dour and ungenial with the *Daily Express* noting as an 'American born linguist (sic)[44], teetotaller, non-smoker...the sombre schoolmaster' (*Daily Express*, 28/05/1943, p.2), whilst the *Picture Post* portrayed 'one of Mr de Valera's most striking achievements is to have made Irish politics dull' (Anon, 10/07/1943). However, he was more frequently portrayed as a 'virulent Anglophobe' with a hatred for Britain so strong that he would endanger his own countrymen. The *Cassandra* column described him 'a silent soured old man…A leader who has forgotten how to lead. A boneless wonder shivering on the scaffold of what used to be called 'neutrality' (*Daily Mirror*, 10/056/1941, p.2). He was also charged with having 'a singularly stubborn and inelastic mind' (*Aberdeen Press & Journal,* 11/03/1944, p.2) and seeing Ireland through rose-tinted spectacles (*Aberdeen Press & Journal*, 23/10/1941, p.2). A strained argument was asserted by some that de Valera was not truly Irish, attempting to further distance his motivations from those of the Irish people. One early editorial describes de Valera 'As a representative of Irish character he is…a misfit. …he is only half an Irishman' (*Perthshire Advertiser*, 27/11/1940, p.6). Towards the end of the war a reader clutched at the straw of his birthplace by writing 'Personally I am inclined to believe that he is still a citizen of the USA. If that is so…, could he be charged with treason?' (*The Scotsman*, 19/07/1945, p.4), emphasising the lengths to which some would go to punish him. Though some letters to newspapers show support for de Valera, reminding readers of his Irish mother, his rearing in Limerick, his fight for independence in 1916 and that he was

[44] In fact, de Valera was a Mathematician and teacher.

once Chairman of the League of Nations (*Birmingham Mail*, 23/05/1945, p.3), most were dismissive of de Valera as blind to reality and fuelled by hate.

This dismissiveness of de Valera's sensibilities is also apparent in some government papers. In an early War Cabinet meeting Chamberlain implied de Valera had no grasp of his own situation by insisting on the need to instil 'some sense of reality into Mr de Valera' and Halifax, then Foreign Office Minister, urged that McDonald should 'continue the process of educating' him (*TNA, CAB 65/7/68*). Maffey wrote to Lord Cranborne 'de Valera has a 'one-track mind'…. he has never…moved from the…narrow avenue of hate…his prejudices are ingrained now' (*TNA, PREM 3/133/6*), and described Irish protests at the execution of the Coventry bombers as part of 'the congenital anti-English complex' (*TNA, DO 35/1107/1*). Political protestations at the 'ignorance' of de Valera were not confined to Britain. The US ambassador to Eire, David Gray described de Valera's government as 'always the same malign genius that controls. This man is blind to handwriting on walls and deaf to the rumble of approaching catastrophe' (*TNA, PREM 3/128*). Such attitudes would lead to the 'American Note' crisis of March 1944, an attempt to make de Valera 'take sides' by either expelling the Axis legations or, by refusing, being cast as aiding Axis espionage, which in time became the focus of frustration and animosity towards Ireland. As Paul Bew argues Gray's memoir show's de Valera's position, unbending since before the war, was destined to disappoint and ultimately frustrate Gray[45], who he felt could not grasp the context of the German threat, especially by prioritising neutrality over an end to partition and a refusal to deviate from a standpoint of moral equivalence between Axis and Allies (Bew, 2012, pp. xiii-xix). His views became progressively strident and came to a head with the American Note Crisis.

De Valera's unmoving stance led Maffey to characterise de Valera's government as a 'dictatorship (that) has created the phenomenon of unity on the basis of neutrality (and must)

[45] Bew argues Gray's reputation has been unfairly maligned in recent analyses spawning what he calls 'the pragmatic pro- neutrality narrative' and that his work was evocative of a high-point in the 'special relationship between Britain and America (Bew, 2012, p. xxx)

make it a casus belli' (*TNA, PREM 3/133/6*), inferring that this was no more than a way to maintain power. Maffey argued that expecting a 'generous gesture' from de Valera was a mistake as 'Generosity is not in his nature. He is cold, calculating, and egotistical. His first interest is himself…he is at the moment in a position of dictatorial power' (TNA, CAB 66/14/2). This view appears in increasingly virulent form throughout the war and appears as an enhancement of the conception of de Valera found in the MO 1939 Race Survey. Elizabeth Bowen's reports to the Dominions Office include a number of observations which tend to support accusations of a dictatorship, including reports that the *Irish Times* felt 'the country's press is free only in name' (31/7/1940, *TNA, DO 130/28*), that de Valera was 'unable to admit that he could ever have been at any time, wrong', and that in the Dail he betrays 'intellectual weariness, and the very barest degree of tolerance exercised towards most of the speakers' (31/7/1942, *TNA, DO 130/28*), though herself never directly suggested any dictatorial use of power. *Cassandra* argued de Valera's 'assertion that those who suggested the people had lost faith in his government, were fifth columnists...shows a lack of balance that augers ill for the Irish people' (*Daily Mirror*, 10/06/1941, p. 2), but stopped short of calling him a dictator. *The Scotsman,* however, declared he 'behaves like an Irish Fuhrer', unable to co-operate with anyone (*The Scotsman,* 21/06/1943, p.4)[46]. The view that he was a dictator must have been widespread enough to encourage the *Daily Express* to disparage it in 'An Englishman's guide to Irish Politics' published in 1944. This Q&A piece explains de Valera was Taoiseach and leader of the largest party in the Dail, rather than a dictator, but implied that because 'he rides roughshod over all opposition' and the other parties are too disunited to pose any real opposition, the effect on politics was the same (*Daily Express*, 13/03/1944, p.2). Bluntly, *Paramount News'* 'Ireland – the Plain Issue' described de Valera as a dictator carrying out his own personal vendetta against England (Cole, 1996, p. 37) proving the US was equally prone to hyperbole when discussing Ireland. One paper directly compared de Valera to Hitler by asserting he was 'using the emergency in which Great Britain finds herself, to

[46] Though all Irish governments during the war were coalitions.

practise as ugly a piece of blackmail as Hitler tried with France and Great Britain over Austria' (*The Scotsman*, 26/12/1941, p.4).

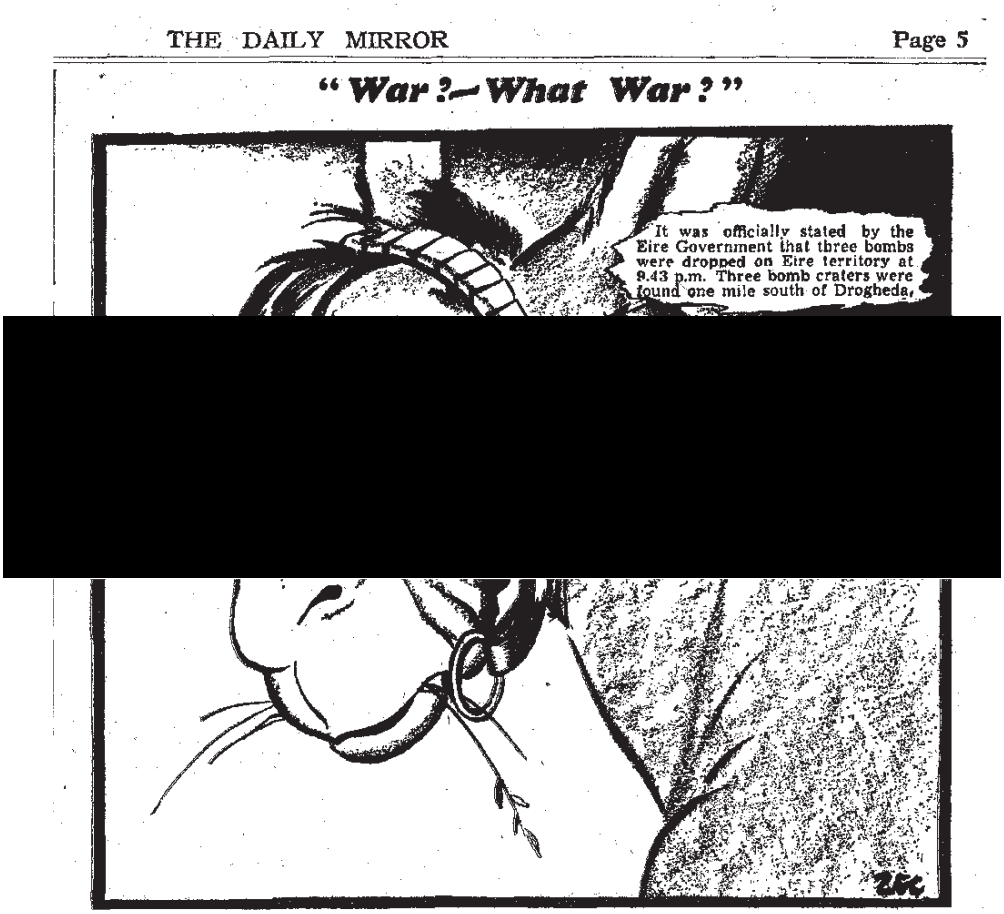


Figure 12: Blinkered and Mulish Eire (Daily Mirror, 03/01/1941)

De Valera's obstinacy was also a feature of newspaper opinion, but some still suggested that 'perhaps Mr de Valera has a price' and alluded to cowardice and corruption asserting that 'this looks like the first time in history that the sheer stubborn bigotry of *one man* has forced a sovereign state to the very edge of the abyss', like the other European neutrals (*Daily Mirror,* 01/11/1940, p.4). A few weeks later *Cassandra*, after the death of Craigavon, suggested that now de Valera's 'formidable foe' is out of the way, his 'bigoted policy that is so destructive to the hopes of all Irishmen of goodwill' may be amended (*Daily Mirror,* 26/11/1940, p.4). Letters to the editor also decry 'the mulish obstinacy of de Valera and his followers' (*Daily Record*, 13/11/1940, p.7), and these accusations of obstinacy appear more frequently, and with more opprobrium as the war progressed, with a 1944 editorial opining that by then de Valera had 'out

Canuted Canute; he denied the very existence of the tides' (Evening Standard, 13/03/1944, LHMA). For British opinion, de Valera was a misguided, hate-filled dictator leading his people to their destruction to spite an ancient enemy.

4.8 Cutting Off the Nose to Spite the Face

By 1941 attitudes towards the Irish in MO appear to change, with neutrality being interpreted as a distancing of Ireland from Britain. The Irish were becoming 'foreign' in aspiration, seen to be becoming insular and uninterested in world affairs, following de Valera 'whose gloomy mind revolves around ancient Irish wrongs', and concluding that they would rather be 'tortured by Germans than to be saved…by America and Britain' (*Daily Mirror*, 29/01/1942, p.3). MO Diarist #5349 was 'amazed and amused at the parochialism of the Irish outlook', arguing Ireland should be exposed to the Nazi's, 'without loss of life', to make them more 'conscious of the great big world' (29/11/1940, *MO Diarist 5349*). Similarly, 'Cassandra' felt their independent foreign policy made Eire 'anti-British, ruled by obstinacy, short-sighted self-interest and enduring historical animosity', and suggested 'that the people of Eire have not yet had enough close experience of the Teuton (*Daily Mirror*, 01/08/19441, p. 2). Similarly, MO diarist #5098 asserted Nazi invasion 'would do them good…Then they would realize that the English are not so bad after all' (06/11/1940, *MO Diarist 5098*). It was a regular assumption that the Irish were so ignorant of the world that they would welcome a British defeat even as the Nazi's came that one step closer to Irish shores.

Many saw this as ignorance as being wilfully blind to the situation. In an Admiralty 'General Report on the Position in Eire' it was asserted 'in certain parts of Eire no interest whatever is being taken in a possible invasion as the inhabitants have no interest outside their farms' (July 1940, *TNA, PREM 3/129/2*). The *News Chronicle* similarly argued the Irish were 'both blind and deaf, for the dictatorial powers of the government censorship department have

blanketed every form of criticism of government and of the belligerent powers' (*News Chronicle,* 13/01/1941, LHMA).

Figure 13: Blind Eire (Daily Mail 06/07/1940)

Analogy to blindness was no doubt exacerbated by widespread knowledge that de Valera had very poor eyesight requiring surgical intervention. A *Daily Mirror* cartoon of de Valera, on a throne, blindfolded like the soldiers guarding him, and sitting under a Nazi dagger (*Daily Mirror*, 06/07/1940, p.2), elicited complaint from the Eire government. Elizabeth Bowen wrote on how easy it was for British opinion to see neutrality as 'an affair of blindness, egotism, escapism or sheer funk' but argued that if all the facts of the Irish situation were well known, England would see the truth in de Valera's contention that war would 'be sheer disaster' for Eire (9/11/1940, *TNA, DO 130/28*). Despite entreaties by some to look beyond first impressions most opinions in British government saw Eire continuing in a 'malade imaginaire' and 'confined by the walls of her sickroom' (1/1/1941, *TNA, FO 371/2910/8*), while Maffey told de Valera that Ireland was 'like a leaf in a backwater between rushing torrents' (20/6/1941, *TNA, DO 35/1109/6*).

As the war progressed Eire fit into a growing narrative that by standing aloof from the world the new country would fail as a nation by consequence of its own actions.

4.9 FAILING IRELAND

Ireland was fast becoming seen as a place apart from the rest of the world, avoiding progress and modernisation, as well as the war. The left-leaning *Picture Post* was at the forefront of a newsprint tendency to portray Ireland as backward, economically, and politically failing, under the yoke of Catholicism, and without aspiration, totally opposite to Britain, fighting for a better world. In January 1941 *Picture Post* devoted a whole issue to planning for a new Britain when the war was over, urging the commitment to achieve an end to food poverty, reform of education, a universal health service, universal employment (Hopkinson, 04/01/1941). In contrast to the aspirations of Britain Eire was reported, in the same magazine, as two-thirds 'peasant farmers' with 'a large head of children' in a land where industry was 'severely discouraged' (MacDonald, 27/07/1940). Predicting failure for de Valera's policy of self-sufficiency, *Picture Post* articles portrayed the people of the south of Ireland as 'a people conditioned by a defiant Nationalism, an archaic language….' (C. Connolly, 11/04/1942), with 'no great aptitude for things mechanical' (MacDonald, 27/07/1940) and contrasted them with the Northern Irish by charging Southerners as behaving like 'overgrown infants' (Ervine, 02/03/1940). Such articles led to a *Picture Post* ban in Eire, an outcome that only served to confirm to readers the oddity and paradox that was Ireland. One readers letter starts with 'Congratulations on your banning in Eire' and deprecates Irish censorship as having 'cultivated a queer habit of using a robust blue pencil to knock their own brains out' (Fegen, 24/08/1940).

However, it was the *Sunday Dispatch* that published the most stinging article of this type. Dorothy Crisp's article 'I see the Tragedy of Ireland' (*Sunday Dispatch,* 05/06/1943, LHMA), suggested the Irish people should reassess whether the de Valera government's insistence on neutrality was worth the price they had to pay for their current situation. The article insists 'Eire

is dying a slow death at the hands of the de Valera government' which is characterised as 'an iron dictatorship and a censorship that could teach Goebbels a few tricks'. Recounting a declining birth-rate, heavy censorship, increasing emigration and the assertion that the economy was upheld by money sent home from the Irish abroad as evidence of hopeless economic situation, Crisp describes the Irish government as causing 'informed people everywhere (to want) only one thing - the British to come back and impose one government on the whole country' (*Sunday Dispatch*, 05/06/1943, LHMA). The article portrays all Irelands problems as a product of their own action or inaction, and, though the article presents valid points about unemployment, emigration and birth-rates, the expectation that these would cause economic collapse, was grossly exaggerated. Eire was portrayed as being oppositional to the aims of the 'plan for Britain' and 'the People's War', by allowing continued poverty, poor health, poor education, emigration, and unemployment to continue without planning for a better, more industrious future. The article connects progress and war so closely that one cannot seem to be imagined without the other. Eire's attempts to achieve progress without bloodshed are somehow seen as less laudable than British progress at the cost of millions of lives. It is undoubtedly the conclusion that the 'informed' people of Ireland would want a return to British rule that led Irish government to block the import of the *Dispatch.* for this not only implies that the great majority of Irish people were ignorant to their own condition, but also that the Irish state, because of its impending failure, had no right to independent existence. That Ireland's dreams of a country 'joyous with the sounds of industry' were only slightly different than those of the 'people's war', as exemplified in de Valera's St. Patricks Day speech in 1943 (Quoted in R Fisk, 1985, p. 417), would preferably be achieved without bloodshed, mattered little.

Several other sources reflect public feeling that Ireland would forever be dependent on Britain. Commenting on a visit to Ireland 'JS' wrote to the Dominions Office of the Irish that 'they are in a position where they are forced to admit their dependence on Great Britain' (30/9/1942, *TNA, DO 130/28*). In the War Cabinet, as early as 1940, Cranborne presented a memorandum arguing that 'The Irish are at present living in a world of illusion. They consider

that a prosperous Eire is indispensable to Britain…. (but) she is entirely dependent on us' (*TNA, PREM 3/128*). This attitude continued into 1942 with Maffey writing that Eire will fail as a state and must look to Britain for relief, blaming this situation entirely on de Valera's policies, including neutrality, and asserting that de Valera himself knew as much (2/2/1942, *TNA, CAB 66/21/37*). This kind of attitude, alongside continued British and American refusal to arm Eire so she could defend herself, caused not entirely unjustified resentment in Ireland. At the same time, that British people were uninterested in Ireland and repudiated all Irish nationalist aspirations, dismissing the Irish with 'expressions of contempt for, and impatience with, the policy of Mr de Valera's government' and 'little sympathy for their afflictions' (12/2/1941, *TNA, INF 1/292*). A *Times* editorial reflects this disinterest by describing the 1943 election as 'hardly even a footnote in history' (*The Times,* 26/06/1943, p.5) and another paper asserted it was irrelevant to Britain if de Valera were to fall and the 'Cosgrave party' take over because 'the difference for us would be that between Tweedledum and Tweedledee' (*Dundee Courier*, 26/06/1943, p.2). British derision for Ireland and the Irish ranged from ignorance of any problem to asserting the Irish could never be truly independent.

Those who were slightly more interested in Ireland often used the cause of Irish language revival as evidence of backward-looking policies doomed to failure. Before the war attempts to revive the Irish language were blamed for lowering the standard of education and creating a new ideology which made 'fanaticism a virtue' (*Birmingham Post,* 23/08/1939, p.13). Maffey characterised de Valera's aspirations for Ireland as to create a walled-in 'island paradise' with 'everyone talking Gaelic' as 'a nightmare to the average Irishman' (*TNA, DO 35/1107/1*), and a correspondent to the Times decried 'Erse-ridden Eire' (*The Times,* 11/11/1940, p.5). That several German diplomats and academics were interested in Gaelic revivalism, did not help the cause of language revival in British eyes (9/11/1940, *TNA, DO 130/28*), though British press attaché John Betjeman used the Irish language[47] as part of his soft power approach to propaganda (O'Drisceoil,

[47] Betjeman frequently wrote letters to Irish correspondents in Gaelic language and script. He wrote to Coyne, Irish censor, that 'by this time next year, my letters will be wholly in Irish if I am alive' (Quoted in O'Drisceoil, 1996, p. 147).

1996, p. 197). By 1944, attitudes had hardened to the point where de Valera's speech arguing 'that if Eire fails to make Irish the everyday language of the people' it will have 'failed in everything' was used as evidence that De Valera's government had truly failed (*Dundee Courier*, 14/08/1944, p.2).

Towards the end of the war newspapers reported that de Valera's government had created an economic disaster and that the Irish people were poverty stricken. The *Times* argued that 'the sole preoccupation of Mr de Valera's government of Eire is to find palliatives for an economic situation which has reduced many Irish standards to those of the eighteenth century' (*The Times,* 26/06/1943, p.5). Newspapers also saw Ireland as having failed to become 'a modern nation' by not concentrating on progress and compromising with Britain (*Daily Record*, 13/01/1940, p.7). A narrative connecting lack of modernisation to the possibility of a recurrence of famine also emerged. Newspaper articles blame poverty on the current government and linked neutrality with causing misery and starvation, especially in rural areas. The *Western Mail* asserted that if de Valera had joined the war in 1939 'Eire would today be enjoying a period of prosperity instead of languishing in the depths of despair, a branded country with a future entirely devoid of hope' (*Western Mail*, 04/12/1944, p.2), whilst another editorial relates 'Eire's penalty for neutrality' is that Eire 'has suffered just as severely as if Germany had added her to her list of occupied countries' (*Yorkshire Post,* 16/11/1944, p.2)[48]. As early as 1940 the *Daily Mail* had warned of potential famine and *Forward!* replied pointing out that no matter the level of poverty and potential for famine, under British rule, for most of the Irish people, this had always been a possibility (*Forward!* 30/05/1940, LHMA). Though there was evidence by 1941 of heightened discontent in Eire focussing on food and other supply shortages, increasing unemployment, censorship, and ineffective controls on profiteering (26/3/1941, *TNA, INF 1/292*), such discontent still did not transform into desire to end neutrality. Though Elizabeth Bowen frequently heard 'We'd be better off if we were in the war!' (12/7/1942, *TNA, DO 130/28*) this was not a majority

[48] Though presumably with less destruction, brutality, murder, and genocide.

view[49], and yet there is, alongside the narrative of impending starvation, a narrative of plenty, often judged in comparison with food supplies and rationing in Britain.

Though some reports from Ireland emphasised a 'fallacious impression of plenty, created by the ample supplies of meat, butter, eggs and milk, jam, tinned fruit etc.' there were still two basic shortages of wheat and fuel which would impact more directly on the economy than others (30/4/1942, *TNA, DO 130/28*) and were subject to stringent government control[50]. Postal censorship reports indicated that by 1943 69% of correspondents were dissatisfied with living conditions in Eire, but the same report notes British visitors saw a different picture, writing 'The food over here is wonderful, plenty of meat, ham, chocolate and fruit, the beer is terrific, you wouldn't know there was a war on here…' and that 'Northerners who come down here by the thousand their pockets stuffed full of money buying anything and everything' (8/9/1943, *TNA, CJ 4/30*). Visiting MO diarists noted the abundance of food (7/9/1941, *MO Diarist* 5080) and one, from NI, referenced gaining supplies from the South, by various means, after admitting she felt 'abnormally hungry all the time' (5/3/1940, *MO Diarist 5462*).

Though reports reflect a belief in both possible famine *and* plenty, in comparison with supplies available on ration in Britain, availability of food became an obvious point of division between the peoples of Ireland and Britain. Postal censorship reports note that complaints of food shortages in Britain 'come mainly from people with Irish names' and that 'Most people agree that the rations are ample and forbid their correspondents to try to send them supplies from Ireland' (30/8/1940, *TNA, CAB 66/11/39*). Though both peoples considered themselves adversely affected by food rationing, Irish people in Britain were considered to complain more and thus were less supportive of the sacrifice to be made by all.

[49] See TNA, CJ 4/30, 1/2/1942
[50] Compulsory tillage was introduced alongside a total ban on private use of motor vehicles, moves which undoubtedly affected the governments popularity in rural areas.

4.10 'THE PEOPLES WAR'

Visitors to Ireland also often remarked on the contrast between Britain at war and Eire at peace, enjoying their visit as relief from the pressures of 'the people's war'. As Carol Acton argues visitors saw Ireland 'as both an escape from wartime stresses and a place whose refusal to be disrupted by larger European events makes it seem indifferent to the experience of its wartime participants' (Acton, 2010, p. 43). MO diarist #5080, in Ireland days before the outbreak, admitted he and his father 'wished very much we could stay …for 'the duration' if it came - and be out of it…' (30/8/1939, *MO Diarist 5080)* and another noting being in Dublin 'was like living in a different country altogether – no blackout[51], no excess of soldiers …' (4/12/1939, *MO Diarist 5102*). Other visiting diarists noted the slower pace of life, the friendliness of the people and the beauty of the Irish landscape, and the ease with which the war could be forgotten (*MO Diarist 5067*; *MO Diarist 5080*; *MO Diarist 5102*). One diary records a friend's impressions in which he saw 'no reason why they should abandon their neutrality' (7/9/1941, *MO Diarist 5067*). Yet visitors could not ignore the war completely, and one qualifies her feelings; 'Yet I had a feeling of depression – I couldn't live in such a precious peace – purchased, as it were, at other people's expense, while they are suffering' (2/5/1941, *MO Diarist 5245*).

British Forces personnel training in Northern Ireland also recorded good times in Eire escaping from the war. On a visit to Bundoran, Co. Donegal, in Eire, Gunner Christy noted 'Lough Erne's wooded islands…a place of escape from war' and 'tea at a boarding house - best had for ages' (13/7/1942, Christy, 1942, IWM). RAF Officer Willert related to his wife visits to the home of a retired Colonel in the same county, feeling 'that these people were really pleased to have me for my own sake' (5/1/1940, Willert, 1940, IWM). Later the same year he writes 'Back again in Eire for work…A step back into the happy past …nothing to do but watch and dream…' (20/5/1940, Willert, 1940, IWM) and in September after a walk by a lake in Donegal 'I had a

[51] A BIPO poll in 1942 revealed the blackout in Britain was the war restriction that the public resented most with 40.19% of respondents disliking it (Liddell et al., 1996).

comfortable bed of heather and went half asleep and dreamed vaguely…It was good to be alive' (30/9/1940, Willert, 1940, IWM). Navy Coder S W Wallace recorded being told friendly tales by locals[52] and friendly border guards when crossing the border to get cheaper beer and otherwise unobtainable ice-cream in Eire (30/6/1943, Wallace, 1943, IWM). For visitors, this peaceful isle now seemed so different from Britain, like *another country.* The seductiveness of an oasis of peace felt by British visitors in neutral Ireland, was a relief to some but for others led to resentment, not only due to Eire being under the protection of Britain, but also due to longing for such peace at home. Many felt that Eire's neutrality had allowed them to shirk their part in the war as part of the British Empire, and the relative lack of disruption caused by being outside the war distanced the Irish from the experience of the British people.

This relationship to the war was often portrayed as availing of the benefits of empire without contributing. MO diarist #5349 reflected on Irish neutrality that 'As it is, they get all the best of the empire and turn down the responsibility' (29/11/1940, *MO Diarist 5349*) despite evidence of many Irish people fighting privately in the British Forces. A letter to the editor reveals the opinion that the Irish 'have no sympathy with our effort to keep alive the true spirit of humanity' yet 'they are re to-day living ...because we are shouldering the burden in every direction, and they are doing nothing - nothing to help us'[53]. This letter further suggests a boycott of Irish goods and advocates that British ships should no longer supply Eire 'for the benefit of these people who dislike us so intensely' (*Western Mail*, 23/11/1940, p.5). An editorial comes to a similar conclusion noting de Valera 'This inveterate enemy of Great Britain… prepared to benefit by the protection which British naval and air power…remains austerely aloof' (*The Scotsman*, 26/12/1941, p.4). The characterisation of Eire as an enemy was also felt in government as Churchill remarked in the right circumstances the British people would show 'a storm of wrath against de Valera and his adherents', and in any case, they had a right to know 'who are the enemies who are hampering our efforts to feed them' (*TNA, ADM 1/10366/274/4*).

[52] Including that an old lady quietly snoozing in a canteen he visited was General Montgomery's mother!
[53] Unknowing of vital intelligence co-operation and other aid described in the Cranborne Report

The differing experiences of war in Britain and Eire were also proved by a narrative of acceptance of the British experience by some Irish people living in Britain. HI reports evidence of opinion that these were 'ashamed to admit their nationality, because people are so contemptuous of their country's neutrality' (8/1/1941, *TNA, INF 1/292*) and this was reflected in government circles where Brendan Bracken, Minister for Information barred the BBC from covering the Eire elections arguing 'the public would be horrified if they heard anything from the BBC about de Valera and those lousy neutrals; people of Irish stock overseas are heartily ashamed of Eire's attitude' (Quoted in O'Donoghue, 2014, p. 120). In 1941, however, a HI report acknowledges that praise of British resolve written to Ireland from countrymen in Britain did not change Irish attitudes to neutrality (12/2/1941, *TNA, INF 1/292*). Fear of air attack was charged as being the main difference between the stoic British character and the apprehensive Irish. When postal censorship revealed 'some writers are annoyed at rumours prevalent in Ireland of destruction done by air-raids' with one relating from Newcastle that 'people here are not much annoyed by the planes coming, we all go down to the shelters and sing songs' (30/8/1940, *TNA, CAB 66/11/39*) indicating the shared experience of the Blitz helped create a new unifying force, which separated the Irish in Britain from the Irish in neutral Ireland.

4.11 Religion

Religious differences also compounded the growing conception of Irish separation from the Empire, and on occasion, duplicitous Irishness and Catholicism are treated as one and the same. A housewife in Bolton comments in June 1940, that 'next door, she's an Irish woman, she's Roman Catholic…. She got turned out of the store down her (sic) for being fifth column' (*MO File Report 181 - Capitulation Talk in Worktown*, 1940). Diarists with links to Northern Ireland, often discussed Irish Catholicism with abject distaste, with one describing it as 'That horrible religion…' (5/5/1945, *MO Diarist 5296*), and another writes of the Catholic church as 'an honourable, dignified, sincere, elevated, trustworthy, intelligent cage' (14/11/1940, *MO Diarist 5439*). Both appear to believe its followers, often Irish Nationalists, deluded by Catholic teachings

and influenced by a religion disinterested in freedom of thought and action. 'American soldiers in Northern Ireland' records rumoured deaths after drinking local home-brewed poteen, giving the rumour credit because a confirming source '*was Protestant and a reputable citizen…*' (*MO File Report 1306 - Americans in Ireland*, 1942), implying that local Catholics were not. Catholicism, being a convenient marker for distinguishing loyalty to the crown, was also to be used as a marker of credibility.

A report on the Greenock By-Election of 1941 similarly notes the existence of religious communities in Scotland, relating that 'The Irish in Greenock …seem to be a smaller and less unpopular minority than in Glasgow', but reveals 'Battle of the Boyne celebrations (12th July) …are declining very rapidly. There hasn't been a fight for 4 or 5 years… (*MO File Report 778 - Greenock By-Election*, 1941). It seems that enduring sectarian antipathy, in Scotland at least, only required an igniting spark to rise once more to conflagration. Continuity of religious antagonism is also hinted at in a report on 'Morale in Liverpool and Manchester', where it is noted that the Irish 'are surprisingly not the subject of racial statements about bad morale from the Non-Irish', yet blames this on a 'lack of close ties with Liverpool as a native home', and this 'lack of identification with Liverpool …being offset by Roman Catholicism, which gives a positive faith and guidance in difficult times, a factor which has been found extremely advantageous to morale' (*MO File Report 538 - Liverpool and Manchester*, 1940). That religion is seen as a negative influence in Glasgow and a positive influence in Liverpool and Manchester, suggests that the attitude of the natives was more dependent on the holder of the opinion rather than the subject of it. It seems more likely that showing the 'right attitude' to the war, rather than religious affiliation, was of more importance to public opinion.

4.12 Conclusion

In the Interwar period, as Mo Moulton has shown (Moulton, 2014), Irishness had become less politicised mainly due to the creation of the Irish Free State and reduced activity by the IRA.

Though the 'S-Plan' bombings in Britain created outrage and anti-IRA feeling, attitudes to the Irish people, aside from their government, were often conciliatory. The MO 1939 Race survey shows, as Clair Wills argues, that MO respondents did not feel the Irish to be foreigners, rather an integral part of the empire and even the UK (Wills, 2008). However, the same survey makes it clear that de Valera, and the Irish nationalism that he came to represent to British people, was felt to be representative of all that was wrong with Ireland. On occasion the survey also proved that many MO contributors also found it hard to distinguish between the motivations of the IRA and constitutional nationalists working within the democratic political system. Some also thought the Catholic Church too powerful and a force working against progress and freedom of thought. However, it was clear that though Ireland was thought of as being misled by nationalists, it was still thought of as one of the home nations.

At the outbreak of war, despite frequent reports that Ireland would be neutral, public expectation was that Ireland would join the Dominions in declaring war. When Ireland did not, public opinion, and newspaper narratives, reflected a failure to accept that the ordinary Irish people supported neutrality. Newspapers, either due to poor investigation or a desire to promote 'a people's war' narrative, in the main chose to believe the Irish people were being misled by anti-British Irish nationalist politicians. The British government was party to more accurate information from postal censorship reports which reflected an Irish public sympathy for Britain, but also a belief in neutrality, identifying it with Irish independence. These insights created a cautious consensus in the War Cabinet that, unless circumstances changed, and considering the secret and valuable intelligence co-operation already in place, it would be better for Britain to not to use force against Ireland. However, this was all unknown to the press and public who, even after the 1943 election re-instated de Valera, still found it hard to believe the Irish people were not on the British side, and a new narrative emerged that Irish people joining the British Forces were now exhibiting the true Irish 'fighting spirit'. Those who joined up had taken sides and were cast as Anti-neutral although there was much evidence to the contrary. The narrative of the Irish people being misled by nationalism only got stronger throughout the war, especially in reaction

to the Fall of France, the Battle of the Atlantic, the reaction to spy scares and the preparations for D-Day, showing that feeling towards Ireland and the Irish was highly reactive to circumstance. In a war of extremes, it was much easier for people to believe in binary choices rather than nuanced reality.

However, it is impossible to discount the effect of historical antipathy, where, when it suited British opinion, the Irish could easily be regarded as foreigners though the nations were united in one state before independence. As early as 1940 there are signs that the Irish were once more being regarded as foreign. It is important to note public reaction to foreigners in general was at least antipathetic, and similar sentiment toward the Irish can be found against refugees, and especially, Jews. An MO Anti-Semitism survey (*MO, FR A12 - Anti Semitism Survey*, 1939) reports accusations of 'Job snatching, cheap labour, undercutting, boycotting' by Jews, accusations that would latterly be levelled at the Irish. Attitudes to their supposed 'character', formed in previous centuries, also plainly retained cultural currency. Ancient charges of indolence, stupidity, superficial charm, and inability to face the facts, are used to bolster and boost opinion that Eire's actions were expected to be troublesome because it was in their nature. Notably one aspect of older Irish prejudices not repeatedly used, though by no means absent, is the trope of comical paradoxical Irishness. Treating the Irish as a joke was far less prominent than in previous times, reflecting the level of danger that Irish neutrality was supposed to present.

There was also evidence that 'Irishness' was being recast by the British concurrently alongside 'Britishness' by the trials of war. Irishness was becoming oppositional to everything that Britishness meant. Angus Calder argued the 'myth of the blitz' narrative helped debar the Irish from the collective struggle against the Nazi's (Calder, 1991, pp. 65-66). Because the Irish were not in the war, they were not learning the lessons the British were learning, at least according to the myth of the 'people's war'. The Irish were afraid of air-raids, were not standing up to oppressors, were not fighting for progress, were not sharing in a common constructive experience, which would shape the future. As Clair Wills argues '…as the war was increasingly understood as a 'people's war', a struggle by ordinary civilians against the monster of Hitlerism, Ireland's

stance was looked upon as a betrayal of democracy itself' (Wills, 2008, p. 7). In a time when all motivations were becoming interpreted as part of an ideology, Ireland's stance could not be seen by the British as practical, it had to be aloofness and avoidance of responsibility.

The Irish were also being cast as backward-looking and ruled by grudges of the past and because of this destined to fail, even to the point of having to return as part of the UK. De Valera's St Patrick's Day speech of 1943 is often represented, to this day, as a backward looking, idealist vision of an Ireland which almost celebrated poverty, using the term 'frugal comfort' as an ideal for the future. However, as David McCullagh points out, this 'frugality' was to be achieved by a fairer distribution of wealth, to ensure a minimum for everyone, through modernisation and economic growth (McCullagh, 2018, p. 229). Envisaging an 'ideal Ireland' a land 'whose countryside would be bright with cosy homesteads, whose fields and villages would be joyous with the sounds of industry, with the romping of sturdy children…' (Quoted in R Fisk, 1985, p. 417), de Valera's vision was perceived as being unachievable and undesirable in Britain, though this was the same aspiration expected of the post-war British Governments by the British electorate. Adherence to Catholicism fit this narrative, similarly fearful of modernisation and free-thinking, and historically disloyal to the crown, also enabling the portrayal of spiritual inspiration for neutrality as smugness. Similarly, the question of Eire's claims to Northern Ireland was the bearing of an ancient grudge, which should be forgotten in the face of Hitler. Elizabeth Bowen characterised this different view of history as Irish 'childishness and obtuseness' but accepted that 'any hint of a violation of Eire may well be used to implement enemy propaganda and weaken the British case' (*TNA, DO 130/28*). By 1942 public opinion of Ireland and the Irish was dismissive and disinterested in a nation that had stepped aside from responsibility and was suffering for its lack of ambition. However, Irish suffering was not characterised as stoically borne like Britain's and was being interpreted as being for little purpose. Thus, Ireland was both an escape from war and indifferent to it.

5 IRISH IMMIGRANT WORKERS IN BRITAIN

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Public opinion on Irish people who settled in Britain had always revolved around a dichotomy; that is that Irish people, until 1949 in British law, were British citizens, but were culturally 'foreign', which made them perceptually mutative. Cultural differences became obvious as emigration to Victorian Britain grew with the death of Irish industries and with the popularity of Social-Darwinist pseudo sciences of 'race', which gave putative justification to fear and disdain of cultural difference. By the time the Irish Free State was formed the legal basis of Irish Nationality had not changed, but perceptions of Irish perfidiousness in the revolutionary period certainly had. Both the new Irish State and Britain aimed to reduce migration, with the Free State governments fearing British restriction would expose the shortcomings of Independent Ireland (Daly, 2006, p. 139), and Britain fearing societal unease. Though there had been previous attempts to limit or stop Irish immigration to Britain[54], post 1921 attempts to do so assumed, with the Southern Irish now ruling their own state, Britain should rescind their British nationality. Daly and Delaney have noted especially vocal attempts in Scotland to limit predominantly Catholic Irish migration (Daly, 2006, p. 144 n.; Delaney, 2000, pp. 84-93). In 1928 attempts by Scots local authorities, concerned over the increased numbers of the 'least desirable class of Irish immigrants into this country', requested repatriation of Irish persons who became chargeable to the poor rate, except for 'certain classes of workers e.g., female domestic servants' (TNA, CAB 24/197). In response the Home Secretary, Joynson-Hicks, showing equal disdain for the Irish, concluded that immigration control could not be enforced against British citizens, and that 'the damage had already been done' as it was 'the Irish and their descendants already in Scotland who represent the real problem' (20/02/1929, TNA, CAB 24/201). By July 1930 the requests had been studied

[54] 'Irish immigration' is a misnomer as Irish people, before 1921, were born in the UK so could not be 'emigrating' by moving to another part of it; they were migrants. After 1921 citizens of the Irish Free State and Eire were, in British law, British citizens. I use 'Irish immigration' because it was generally perceived as such.

by the Scottish Secretary, who concluded that that the number of Irish persons being charged to the poor rate in Scotland, the number of Irish people convicted of crimes and indeed the number of Irish immigrants in general, had decreased between 1901 and 1921, and the 1931 census was expected to show a similar decrease (TNA, CAB 24/213). It became clear that any changes to the 'immigration problem' were due to changes in public perception. By 1938 the British government had agreed no restriction of Irish immigrants as they were not a drain on public funds, were useful unskilled workers, and did not cause the unemployment of natives (Glynn, 1981, pp. 61-67).

However, the necessities of war made the continually vital supply of labour from Ireland even more important to the British war economy. Despite traditional unease at Irish immigration, and fears of infiltration by enemies of the state, 198,538 Irish travel permits were issued 1940-1945 to GB and NI (T. Connolly, 2000, p. 52). However, these numbers do not accurately reflect the total number of Irish persons who travelled to Britain to work because they include seasonal workers, those who may not have used the permits, every journey each traveller made, and visitors who did not travel for this purpose. Several sources estimate the number of Irish workers in Britain during the second World War to be around 100,000 persons (Delaney, 1998, p. 31) and the British Foreign Office statistics stated the same number, from NI and Eire, in Britain in 1943 (TNA, DO 35/1230). The paucity of accurate information on the number of Irish people working in Britain in this period typifies the problems inherent in tackling the subject of Irish immigrant workers in general in this period, mainly due to the CTA, disputed British Nationality and poor record keeping. This inaccuracy, coupled with cultural antipathy based on the shared history between Britain and Ireland, means it is extremely hard to find where the truth lay in any of the disputed facts that make up the history of this period, as the official historian of the subject of Irish Labour in Britain during the war acknowledged (TNA, LAB 8/1528, p. 1). However, for the purposes of this study, the contemporary and historical controversy caused by this confusion evidence a large amount of subjectivity, and sometimes violent antipathy in the historical record, worthy of close analysis. These views often existed despite dire necessity for Irish workers and affected the formulation of policy as well as their experience within the milieu this necessity created.

5.2 ONLY IN IT FOR THE MONEY

In 1939 the context of impending war, rearmament, immigration, and the IRA 'S-Plan' attacks combined to create an atmosphere of turmoil and scapegoating. Initial agitation against Irish Immigration was not however based on Eire's attitude to war or the IRA campaign. Initial agitation on immigration was based on the employment of Irish workers while local men were out of work (*The Scotsman*, 19/01/1939, p.10), for example a Liverpool councillor urged an 'Irish Bureau' be set up to monitor the city's Irish immigrants and expel those who fell to poor relief or criminality (*Liverpool Echo,* 19/01/1939, p.9). By February a committee formed on this basis was 'vigorously' promoting a petition to government asking for 'appropriate action in the interests of local labour....' (*Liverpool Daily Post*, 13/02/1939, p.2). While '*The Man o' The People*' column argued unambiguously 'jobs for our own countrymen first and safe employment for all of them when peace returns!' (*The People*, 03/03/1940, p.9), letters to newspapers also linked immigration to high unemployment, with one writer arguing that Irish immigrants should be allowed to enter only if they 'possess enough money to keep themselves for a certain period…' with the added proviso that 'their luggage does not consist of bombs!' (*Northants Evening Telegraph*, 13/05/1939, p.5). Others agreed, concluding that a 'back to Ireland' policy would solve unemployment, while an MO respondent argued Irish people were only interested in British money, 'particularly when they all trouped off home last September' (MO Directive Respondent 1433, 1939), before the Munich Agreement. Irish people were also expected to contribute equally and have the same attitude as British workers and works Welfare officers often argued that the Irish were not 'here to do war work', a typical argument being that 'they are eager to earn as much as they can. That's why most of the Irish girls work pretty well…There's very little evidence of their having the right spirit towards their work...' (02/08/1943, MO File Report 1882 – Fortnightly Bulletin (13)). There was little appreciation of the differing circumstances of Eire's neutral position, her history, or her people's motivations.

By the end of 1941 HI was reporting that Irish neutrality was being added to this resentment which allowed Irish workers to make money while others fought for their right to do

so (12/12/1941, TNA, INF 1/292). However, this was rare; more often economic and security fears affected views on the workers 'invasion' from Ireland. Agencies such as the Wartime Survey and Home Intelligence, repeatedly argued that issues on the Home Front were of most public concern, and Irish immigration one of these. Mary Adams, founder of HI, wrote the purpose of her agencies work was to ascertain 'What the Public is Asking?' and one early specific question on unemployment asked, 'why do labourers (including many Irishmen) earn £10 or more a week building aerodromes and on other government work, while soldiers only earn a few shillings?' (01/08/1940, TNA, INF 1/283), indicating that many felt the government was favouring Irish workers above 'their own'. Further, the Irish, long accustomed to sending money home to family, were frequently accused of profiting from British misfortune as they were not liable for conscription. HI reports note early in the war that locals in Crowborough and Corsham resented Irish labourers working on defence projects, when 'many Britons are unemployed' (8/8/1940, TNA, INF 1/264) and where a man could 'save in a week as much as, in Ireland, he would earn in a month' (11/09/1941, TNA, INF 1/292). Irish workers were not reticent about poor conditions in Eire and that they were glad to be working in Britain arguing 'I'd sooner work in England than in Ireland' and 'They pay very bad money in Ireland. The girls in the shirt factories only get 30/- a week, and they sweat themselves to get it' (MO File Report 1496 - Tube Investments Ltd, 1942). Private letters reveal that many were aware of Irish workers in the jobs of those who had been called up, earning good wages, and expressing intention to stay after the war. One relates the poverty of Eire and tells that the Irish in Britain encourage their friends to come over too; the writer knows this because 'I read their letters…so I get first-hand news of their reactions' (Hudson, 03/12/1941)[55]. No doubt this kind of information spread, and fuelled feeling that the Irish were profiting from neutrality at British expense.

It was acknowledged by the Irish that a lot of money was being sent home and Government Postal Censorship reports showed they were grateful for it. One writer argued 'we would have had a famine here, but for that outlet' (8/9/1943, TNA, CJ 4/30) but another believed

[55] The letter reveals the author was a postal censor.

the work easier, arguing 'you would do more work in one day in Bantry than a week here' (15/01/1942, TNA, CJ 4/30). Though the same source also betrayed evidence that some Irish workers were unhappy with their lot financially[56], there is much evidence the Irish knew they were 'not popular' in a factory context (15/1/1942, TNA, CJ 4/30). HI reports frequently note complaints of high wages for Irish Labourers, with rumours of pay at 'Seven pounds a week with additional lodging allowance of 24s 6d' (22/7/1943, TNA, INF 1/292) and MO noted this affected industrial relations when 'imported workmen, often Irish, come in on high-time rates to build a new factory or aerodrome, upsetting the whole local pattern' (MO File Report 1344 - People in Production, 1942). Some believed the Irish were getting all the best positions in their factory, though it was counter claimed by the Irish workers that locals lacked initiative and drive (MO File Report 1496 - Tube Investments Ltd, 1942). A belief that the Irish getting preferential treatment and were profiting from Britain was widespread throughout the war but came to a head after the Travel ban before the D-Day landings. Editorials were happy that thenceforth Irish workers in Britain 'will not be permitted to leave; and they will pay their share of income tax like every British wage-earner' (*Aberdeen Press & Journal,* 13/03/1944, p.2). Later, correspondents wanted even more from Irish workers, agreeing with one writer who argued that those who did not protest at de Valera's condolences on Hitler's death 'should be sent home' as they 'are not entitled to the same rights as those who opposed the Hun and his partners' (*Birmingham Daily Gazette*,28/05/1945, p.2). This writer appeared to believe that working in Britain required the worker believe in the political morals of the majority, a requirement not unlike that of the regime that had just been defeated.

An MO report succinctly concluded the 'most important…feeling against Irishmen in England (is that they) only come here to undercut British wages and do Englishmen and Scotsmen out of jobs…amass small fortunes (and take) them back to Ireland, thus impoverishing England'

[56] A Report of Irish Labour in the UK No. 4, quoted one writer; 'the men are running out of this job out is the worst in England for pay and conditions. The poor labourers have only 1/5 1/4 per hour...I have not a penny as I can barely feed myself the money is so small' (15/1/1943, *TNA, CJ 4/30*). Another was upset nearly half his income was stopped in tax (08/06/1943, *TNA, CJ 4/30*).

(08/02/1941, MO File Report 569 - Airmen, 1941). Various sources evidence the belief that money was being sucked out of the British economy and this motivated industrial unrest (31/07/1942, MO File Report 1344 - People in Production, 1942). MO reported 'there is no doubt that much money is being sent back to their families in Ireland' but often such views took no account that money was moving all over Britain, to 'Wales, Scotland, Lancashire, and other areas' (01/06/1940, MO File Report 267 - Economic Effects of the War, 1/6/1940)[57]. The same report noted this money was being spent 'paying for previous poverty…repaying arrears on rent, rates, doctors' bills….as well as personal debts' (MO File Report 267 - Economic Effects of the War, 1/6/1940). However, evidence of animosity is more prevalent against the Irish, not least because this was the largest group of imported workers in wartime Britain and because they were actively encouraged by government agencies.

Despite Irish workers doing work necessary for the smooth running of the war economy, some even saw no return or benefit arising from their employment. Indeed, one newspaper report linked the workers remuneration, suggested to be £5 million pounds a year, to the 'land annuities Mr. de Valera's government objected to paying' as part of the 1938 Agreement (*Daily Telegraph,* 03/08/1942, LHMA), implying that Ireland was recouping her loss of this money unfairly. Many did not consider the money well-earned and ignored the fact that it was taxed at the same rate as home workers. An exchange of letters in *The Times* indicates some of the resentment, and fear of economic ruin, that characterised opinions on Eire, historically considered to be a drain on British resources. St John Ervine, Ulster playwright and World War One veteran, argued in a series of letters to *The Times,* that the true figure leaving Britain was £7 million, representing 'a clear gain to Eire', and that this led him to believe Eire would be bankrupt without 'being maintained, as well as protected, by Great Britain and Northern Ireland' (*The Times*, 29/05/1943, p.5). Responses to his letter point out that this was not 'a clear gain', but was given in exchange for services, gladly received, at least, by the farmers of South Lincolnshire, who felt the Irish 'excellent

[57] On occasion Jews, Scots and the Welsh were blamed for 'taking British Jobs'(sic) (01/11/941, *MO File Report 1496 - Tube Investments Ltd*, 1942)

workers (and) they certainly give us good value for money', whilst another pointed out that a large proportion of it was being sent home by Irish men and Women in the Forces or involved in vital war-work (*The Times*, 01/06/1943, p.5). Ervine re-iterated his opinion once more in 1945, once more ignoring the value of labour, arguing if Irish people could maintain themselves in Britain as well as their family at home it was evidence that Great Britain and NI was 'subsidising Eire, and being repaid with neutrality' (*The Times,* 06/03/1945, p.5). This time it was General Hubert Gough's turn to point out that remittances represented evidence 'of a single aspect of the magnitude of the unofficial contribution to our British war effort' (*The Times,* 14/03/1945, p.5), whilst another General, Hugh Montgomery, made the same point and asked if Ervine 'also grudges the pay to the approximately equal numbers of voluntary enlistments from Eire in his majesty's fighting forces?' (*The Times*, 16/03/1945, p.5). Once more Ervine replied that Eire was reliant on Britain and should re-join the Commonwealth (*The Times*, 26/03/1945, p.5), whilst another correspondent counter-argued Eire was the nation which would feed Britain for years to come (*The Times*, 09/05/1945, p.5). The whole argument Ervine put forward, described by Hugh Montgomery with understatement as 'curiously ungenerous' (*The Times*, 16/03/1945, p.5), typifies the resentful reaction of most commentators, even those with some knowledge of Eire and the articulacy to argue their point with appropriate nuance. Ervine's argument, like most, could not escape the essential basis of anti-Irish cultural bias; that Britain was more powerful than Ireland, and in all things superior, so Ireland should submit to her.

5.3 TAKING ADVANTAGE

Not only were Irish workers resented for sending money home to Ireland but also for taking advantage of other British comforts at British expense, rather than as a return for their labour. Some resented the workers right to vote in Britain, later raised in the commons (*Derby Daily Telegraph,* 03/11/1943, p.5), and incredibly that the Irish 'listened to Lord Haw-Haw and nothing else', believing 'atrocity stories as lies' (20/3/1944, TNA, INF 1/292), whilst it was possible that Britons also might believe such propaganda. Opinion also linked their stay with

conscription, arguing that to be conscripted was the price Irish people should pay for working in Britain (MO Directive Respondent 1452, 1939). By May 1939 a Coventry newspaper, before the August bombing, argued that Eire enjoyed 'all the privileges of common citizenship while sharing none of the responsibilities', and therefore that Irish Immigrants should 'serve or go home' (*Coventry Midland Daily Telegraph*, 01/05/1939, p.6). Of course, after the Coventry bombing feeling against Irish immigrants became more violent as it encompassed hatred of their connection with terrorism

However, most opprobrium was accrued by those who sought medical treatment in Britain, which tended to bolster popular theories of Irish pestilence and poor hygiene. Though it was true that many of the diseases and infections still not eradicated by post-war universal healthcare were a problem in Ireland, fear of contagious disease being transported through these workers was more of a concern to the MoL than the impact of actual disease. Before 1943 reports from billeting officers reported to various agencies that the health and hygiene of some of the Irish workers was cause for concern, and some resented the drain on the resources of the state. Pressure was building for the imposition of health checks before arrival in Britain. The official history of the employment of Irish workers in wartime Britain, by A.V Judges, reports that many providing billets for the Irish workers were 'distressed by the lack of familiarity with common sanitary appliances shown by some of the billettees…(some)…without the remotest notion of what baths and lavatories were for' (TNA, LAB 8/1528, p. 35). Though the writer acknowledged that British workers could be dirty, that the Irish may not have had the best of facilities on their journey, and 'travel was a peril (to hygiene) in itself'[58], nevertheless Irish workers 'had a bad name' (TNA, LAB 8/1528, pp. 44-45). A HI special report on 'Imported labour' revealed they were seen as 'a source of constant trouble' with one factory matron arguing 30% of these, from Scotland and Ireland, were either filthy, lousy, or diseased, and one Town Clerk had evidence that thirty-seven potential billets issued 'blank refusals from housewife's to accommodate them' (*TNA,*

[58] The Judges history acknowledges the transit hotels in Dublin which many workers were practically compelled (page 44) to use before they embarked, had a very poor reputation, and it must have been difficult to avoid contamination from fellow travellers on route.

INF1/292: Special Comments Industry: Imported Labour). Billeting officers also 'looked askance at Irish men and women' and few authorities would agree to compulsory billeting. Indeed, it the MOH ruled that 'compulsory billeting was never to be used, even as a threat where Irish workers were concerned, as feeling ran so high' (TNA, LAB 8/1528, p. 42). However, instances of contagion were few with 'only a small proportion of the Irish…verminous, dirty, drunken, and diseased, but their number was sufficient to terrify the ordinary housewife' (TNA, LAB 8/1528, pp. 43, footnote 41) already prejudiced against troublesome Irishry. There is some evidence that the MoL attempted to allay these fears after attempts to blame the Irish workers for an outbreak of scabies in Birmingham, arguing that they was 'no direct evidence that Irish importees are more subject to scabies than other people of the same type', concluded 'this is, however, a very different thing from saying that the Irish importees are responsible for the spread of the complaint' (1942, TNA, LAB 26/9). This argument did not clearly dispute the argument that the Irish workers were unhygienic, rather it argued that there was no evidence they were diseased before coming to Britain. Despite the acceptance of many anti-Irish tropes, it was plain that necessity required the recruitment to continue.

However, MO records occasions where expectations were upset, and the Irish workers treated with kindness once they had been accepted. One notable example being the billeting of an Irish girl who, on becoming ill and having had an operation, was abandoned by her employer and the Labour Exchange, and forced to rely on her landlady's kindness while convalescing. The landlady's initial resistance to an Irish lodger changed to anger at government who had brought the girl over here and then denied all responsibility, vowing to 'raise hell until something is done' (MO File Report 1344 - People in Production, 1942, p. 292). However, according to Judges many billeting housewives contended with lodgers with 'odd physical or mental defects' such as serious hernias, and a few astonishing cases of 'raving maniacs, cripples and at least one totally blind man', but 'these were oddities and rare' (TNA, LAB 8/1528, p. 43), but still undoubtedly caused resentment. However, the Judges history loses some of its objectivity when relating that 'the most improbable physical and mental complaints were apt to develop after workers reached their destination', and that a significant number of pregnancies were dealt with in Britain (TNA, LAB

8/1528, p. 38), suggesting that that some wanted to avail of better healthcare than that available at home. In this idea he was not alone, and some believed Irish women were not only availing of British facilities but were also using the excuse of working in Britain to hide the shame of an unwanted pregnancy (MO File Report 1496 - Tube Investments Ltd, 1942). As Jennifer Redmond has pointed out such concerns and assumptions fed into an already established 'narrative that focussed almost exclusively on the shame of the 'fallen woman'', allowed for British opinion to puncture Eire's professed reputation as an exemplary Catholic and moral country, and 'obfuscated the experiences of the vast majority of emigrants…who did not come into contact with welfare services' (Redmond, 2012, pp. 163,183,185). The lack of reliable data on illegitimate births among Irish immigrants has led to historical exaggeration of the problem (Jackson, 1963, p. 69), though more recent analysis of Irish state sponsored Catholic church agencies in Britain, and the dual state sponsored repatriation scheme, has argued that any problem that existed decreased in frequency, for various reasons, year on year (Redmond, 2012, pp. 168-172). Contemporaneously, anecdotal evidence and cultural expectancy, combined with general opinions on the 'deserving' or 'undeserving' poor, combined to create a narrative where Irish people were often seen as undeserving recipients of misguided British charity.

Though the Irish in Britain were often historically assumed only receivers of medical care (Miskell, 2003, p. 82), it has been argued that the contribution of Irish Medical professionals in Britain has been under-researched (Redmond, 2014). Because an 'oversupply of medical professionals in Ireland was historically absorbed by Great Britain', and 4,652 medical professionals applying for travel permits to return to Eire between 1940 and 1942 (Redmond, 2016b, p. 96), there is evidence of a large cohort of male and female medical Irish migrants in a wide range of medical employments and disciplines (Redmond, 2014). Nursing was 'regarded as the most desirable and accessible profession for those (Irish women) considering migration to Britain' during the mid-twentieth century (Ryan, 2008, p. 460), not least because Irish trained and trainee nurses were exempted from wartime restrictions on immigration to Britain and the high cost of nurse training in Eire (Ryan, 2008, p. 460). Between 1941 and 1948, 17,840 travel permits were issued to Nurses leaving Eire for Britain (Statistical Abstract of Ireland 1949, Quoted in

Redmond, 2012, p. 180)[59]. Additionally, by 1939 the majority of Irish trained doctors headed for work in the British Forces, whose short-service commission system offered much higher remuneration and chances for advancement (O'Connor, 2016, pp. 196-197). That these Irish medical professionals are not recognised in contemporary sources studied here, bar one 'drunken doctor' discussed later in this chapter, speaks of ignorance of their contribution, or a tendency to believe in a continuing narrative of Ireland as being a drain on British resources, rather than a contributor.

By 1943 public opinion had necessitated the addition of standardised pre-travel medical examinations for Irish workers. As the official history points out this innovation covered aspects of general welfare concern (TNA, LAB 8/1528, p. 43) as well as allaying public fears, and allowed for both 'de-lousing' and healthcare checks before reaching Britain. These were taken on by the Irish government and the medical inspection service afforded on behalf of the British government was considered '100 per cent efficient' and that 'not one man or woman who was transferred through the General scheme was able to evade vetting. Several local authorities and private individual's requested the cost of healthcare to be recharged to Eire, with one Scunthorpe hospital even refusing to urgently treat an Irish worker with TB without first gaining a promise from the MoH that they would pay (30/06/1944, TNA, MH 55/1151). Whilst the MoH considered these cases to be so few as to be able to expect the local authorities 'to take these isolated cases in their stride' some authorities questioned the right of the MoL to import people and then charge their healthcare to them. A lengthy controversy ensued between the MoL, MoH and local authorities was widened to involve the treasury, with all parties seeking to evade payment, as it became clear Eire could not be recharged. It was even argued that TB patients should be funded by the MoH while Mental health cases should be repatriated[60] (TNA, MH 55/1151). The row over the cost of welfare for the imported workers was couched in terms that represented the Irish as 'foreign'

[59] The travel permit system recorded only journeys taken rather than persons travelling and includes some of those joining the NHS post-war. However, this is still a large Irish cohort.

[60] By September 1944 it was finally admitted that the cost should be borne by the MoH, pending repatriation, even as the British government refused an offer to fund the treatment of Irish Forces Personnel with war attributed TB from Eire (*TNA, MH 55/1151*).

rather than British citizens, an influx of unwanted persons proving to be more costly than their worth.

5.4 Security Concerns

However, though Anti-Irish feeling was only a part of xenophobic responses to the war, where other minorities were targeted, these prejudices in turn affected attitudes to the Irish. An MO report on 'Aliens' recorded that the conception of 'foreigners' or 'aliens' was dangerously adjacent to that of 'the enemy' (MO File Report 79 - Public Feeling About Aliens, 1940). HI reports resentment of '200 Cypriots', British subjects, who supposedly worked only the requisite weeks required to claim benefits and then left with no reason, before, in an indication of wider concerns, calls for internment of Czech and Polish refugees (30/05/1940, TNA, INF 1/264). By the time of the fall of France, refugees and migrants were conceptually conflated with the threat of espionage. One correspondent to *The Times* argued the column of refugees consisted of many 'genuine cases' but included Quislings, Communists, Fascists, 'friends and admirers of Hitler' plus 'no inconsiderable number of Irish and Indian malcontents' (*The Times*, 21/05/1940, p.7), all considered potential threats to security. Though this writer felt that to intern them all would rob Britain of a potential future 'Anti-Nazi Foreign Legion' (*The Times*, 21/05/1940, p.7), most popular opinion argued the refugees should be refused entry because of the threat they embodied. Such attitudes meant that soon many alien nationals in Britain were at risk of violence. By June 1940 'very strong Anti-Italian feeling' was reported in Wales as many Italian businesses were wrecked by crowds, and all over the country (11/06/1940, TNA, INF 1/264) before Italians joined Germans and Austrian nationals in internment. Where Eire was often equated with enemy countries pre-existing fears of 'a useful Fifth Column nucleus' of about 1,000 Irishmen employed on building defence works in Anglesey, being 'openly' anti-British (10/6/1940, TNA, INF 1/264) and fanned by a 'a press campaign' on 'foreign agents" (TNA, LAB 8/1528), combined to create a perceived invasion by Irish workers harmful to security. Resentment manifested in many ways, but especially in a belief that the Immigrant workers should not be allowed, once they had agreed

to work in Britain, to travel home whilst the war continued. Newspapers reported belief that new workers sold information to the Nazi legation on their return home (*Perthshire Advertiser*, 16/07/1941, p.4), and an HI special report on Merseyside reported that it was 'common knowledge' that it was safe to get a travel permit by promising to stay for the duration and then break that promise, because travel back to Eire or Belfast was so easy to obtain (10/6/1941, TNA, INF 1/292). Open travel to and from Ireland remained a rumbling resentment until coming to a head with the embargo on travel imposed before the D-Day, when this policy was almost universally lauded as putting an end to the problem of security leakage. However, much of popular attitudes seemed to be based on prejudice of what the Irish character, and people, were like, rather than any evidence of treachery. Though Irish workers coming into the country during the war had to face assumptions about their motives, they also had the weight of a long history of Irish Migration to Britain, which created cultural expectations of the societal effect a new influx of Irish might entail. Irish workers were initially expected to be, because of the Irish 'character', much the same as their forebears had been perceived in the years before.

5.5 STEREOTYPES

Many stereotypes formed against Irish workers were based on a generalised fear of cultural difference, and these fears were 'often modelled on the supposed behaviour and characteristics of male workers, with many post-war theories of migration also showing 'a tendency to consider women migrants within narrow domestic and familial concepts' (Ryan, 2008, p. 454). As a result, it is vital to consider issues of gender expectation when discussing perceptions of Irish workers.

Contemporary records studied for this thesis record a generalised fear and suspicion of all outsiders. An MO report on 'Bombing on Merseyside' typifies responses to the newer more 'mixed population' of the city which included 'Chinese, Arabs, Greeks, West Indians, transient seamen…and a large settlement of Irish' but singled out the Irish as 'of a poor, even primitive type' (10/06/1941, TNA, INF 1/292). The Irish, however, were also singled out with HI

exemplifying the Irish as 'not generally liked' and criticised for their supposed temperament, described as 'mostly of a low type, dirty, uncouth and troublesome' (12/12/1941, *TNA, INF 1/293*). The charge of drunkenness is a constant theme concerning male Irish workers, recalling older perceptions of drunken 'navvies'[61], imported labourers from Eire were said to be the 'terror of law-abiding citizens… (while) drunkenness and assault are frequent' and 'several of these labourers have had to be put in mental hospitals' (25/03/1941, TNA, INF 1/292). Reports of drunkenness emerged in most HI regions, and this was especially unpopular where Irish workers were accommodated in private billets, with the public urging the use of labour camps away from local populations (03/09/1941, TNA, INF 1/292). Drunken Irish people were charged with being 'quite childish' and unable to 'control themselves' (MO, FR A12 - Anti Semitism Survey, 1939), and construction workers were said to 'go for miles for a drink and then become fighting drunk' (04/08/1942, TNA, INF 1/292). But it was not only the 'navvies' under suspicion of drunkenness. Postal Censorship picked up an accusation that an Irish doctor working in England was 'always drunk' and had administered too much ether, nearly killing a woman and two children at a hospital in Blackburn. An MoH investigation concluded there was no evidence of his drunkenness at work or at home (TNA, MH 79/515). That the doctor was 'discreetly' investigated based on one report, not an official complaint, says much on the ease with which it was believed that a doctor's 'Irishness' could lead him to endanger patients and negate his Hippocratic Oath. Though there is evidence that Irish drunkenness did occur it appears that accusations would often be believed without supporting evidence. Indeed, Irish workers writing home also complained of their compatriots behaviour, even recording some deportations due to excessive drinking (15/01/1942, TNA, CJ 4/30). These accusations also appear in relation to men, with no accounts of female Hibernian inebriation found in this survey. More balanced reports after lengthy investigation tended to reveal that, even amongst the 'navvies', 'the men are well behaved and have pride in

[61] MO Report on State Managed Pubs in Carlisle 01/07/1944 – Respondents felt it unfair that Carlisle was singled out for state control of Pubs arguing 'we're no worse than anywhere else…it was all these Irish navvies lying piled up in the gutter every Saturday night in the last war that did it' (*MO File Report 2134 - State Managed Pubs in Carlisle*, 1944)

their appearance and conduct', but the actions drunks 'receive undue prominence' while most 'live and work unseen and unnoticed, content to carry on with their work' (*TNA, INF 1/786*). Most perceptions of Irish workers, however, were not formed after investigation, rather after an impulsive recourse to cultural expectation.

Both Male and Female Irish workers were also charged with deliberate absenteeism, time wasting and moaning about conditions (31/08/1943, MO File Report 1882 – Fortnightly Bulletin (13). (1943), with some castigated as cowards for not wanting to return from home leave after heavy bombing raids (MO File Report 1496 - Tube Investments Ltd, 1942). Absenteeism was however not solely a problem with the Irish workers, with the overall rate for 1939-1941 doubling the pre-war figure and rising even more from 1943-1945 (Mackay, 2013, p. 121). MO records rare agreement with Irish 'girls' not wanting to return to blitzed Birmingham, with British workers noting 'I don't blame them' and 'I wouldn't have come back myself' (MO File Report 1496 - Tube Investments Ltd, 1942). Other reports characterised the Irish as 'over here for the cash', 'proud' to be neutral, 'fifth columnists', and Scots respondents reportedly noted 'an Irishman without grievance is miserable, and Ireland has groused down the centuries', while grousing about the Irish (The Sunday Post, 21/12/1941, p.2). Irish workers charged with laziness were often only assimilating themselves into a prevailing culture of lassitude. By the end of 1941 HI was reporting that postal censorship of the Irish mail revealed 'frequent references to deliberate slackness, sometimes on the part of labourers who find idleness condoned, sometimes incited by their superiors' (11/09/1941, TNA, INF 1/292). Many instances appear in these reports of Irish workers reporting slack working by all, with some able to easily slope off into the woods for a nap while others noted that in all Army and Navy contracts 'if you work too hard and get too enthusiastic, well you won't be very popular' (15/10/1941, *TNA, INF1/292: Special Comments Industry: Imported Labour*).

Though both immigrants and local workers were equally slack, competition arose where circumstances warranted. The 'Tubes' MO report relates an attempt by local workers to oust their rivals when covering the Irish women's holidays, by arguing they should be getting their 'better'

jobs as they had outproduced the Irish team by ‘all work(ing) in together’ (MO File Report 1496 - Tube Investments Ltd, 1942). Slack working, it seems, could be easily overcome where competition was fierce enough. The same report plainly states it was the prevailing culture that workers were let ‘lounge about’, with some getting bored waiting for work to be allocated (MO File Report 1496 - Tube Investments Ltd, 1942) and an Irish female voice supported this interpretation arguing ‘nobody ever bothers you. If they see you standing around and not doing anything, they don't ask you what you are supposed to be doing’ (MO File Report 1496 - Tube Investments Ltd, 1942). In such circumstances, it would be unusual for Irish workers to be singled out for laziness where all workers were, to some extent or another, ‘browned off’ by their work. However, the Irish were singled out in greater number, for other reasons, often depending on entrenched gender assumptions.

Additional animosity appeared because of ‘a half-hidden feeling of distrust, and of resentment that women should be doing men's work’ with Irish female workers ‘criticised for going to extremes…either too free in their manner, or too proud to answer a civil "good morning"’ (MO File Report 1496 - Tube Investments Ltd, 1942), falling into the stereotypical ‘historical trope of the Madonna versus the Magdalene, or mother versus the whore’ (Schrover & Yeo, 2010, p. 4). But this male censure was not solely aimed at Irish women. The men of tube Investments argued women in general were ‘a nuisance’ who held up the work, and some even turned to sabotage to prove female workers incompetent. An MO investigator at ‘Tubes’ unearthed evidence that female workers suffered the previous male shift workers dismantling and loosening a lathe in such a way that ‘it would take up to an hour to adjust it into working order again’, to prove women incapable, and prove their own worth outside becoming a conscript. More perceptive male workers agreed this was ‘sabotage’ that they’d be ‘shot for’ in other circumstances (MO File Report 1496 - Tube Investments Ltd, 1942).

The same report also unfailingly refers to the Irish workers as ‘girls’ whilst British workers are referred to as women (MO File Report 1496 - Tube Investments Ltd, 1942), infantilising the Irish, who were often young and unmarried, but also deemed unsophisticated and

impressionable. Jennifer Redmond has pointed out the extra censure Irish female Doctors contended with was a sign that 'the single status of many of these migrant women placed them outside the realm of the traditional' (Redmond, 2014, p. 92), and it is equally probable that Irish women in an engineering environment would have been equally castigated for travelling away from home, unmarried and into traditionally male employment. But infantilization was not solely by the purview of men, or indeed only at 'Tube Investments'. At a nameless munitions factory, the Welfare Officer, a woman referred to as 'Miss B.' who most of the female workers felt was 'lovely', treated the Irish 'girls' 'like a mother' (02/08/1943, MO File Report 1882 – Fortnightly Bulletin (13)) indicating that infantilization crossed lines of gender. Married Irish women or mothers were also subject to prejudice and resentment, with one male Welfare Manager, asked to employ an Irish new mother, despite his obvious misgivings, feels that he 'daren't refuse her'. Perturbed by the mother feeding her child and noticing that she had been discharged from the ATS at around the time of the child's birth, he also takes note she has no wedding ring (01/01/1942, MO File Report 1344 - People in Production, 1942). Though he reluctantly employs her, he plainly feels she will be nothing but trouble as an unmarried Irish woman with a young child. Workers similarly felt the Irish 'girls' too much trouble asserting that they run to welfare officers 'with the most ridiculous things, not to mention troubles right outside the factory…. like this business of getting mothers fixed up' (02/08/1942, MO File Report 1882 – Fortnightly Bulletin (13)). Some may have found the provision of welfare officers time to Irish 'girls' excessive, but at least one of these recognised the dislocation they must have felt, not least by acknowledging that many arrived in British factories 'not told that it's heavy and dirty work when they're in Ireland' (Sheridan, 2000, p. 168). Lunn points out that this shock was not confined to Irish workers (Lunn, 1993, p. 109) but it was also clear that some of the welfare officers recognised that settling the unsettled workers was their job role, with 'Miss B' arguing 'I'm very fond of my Irish family' and admitting some 'weren't treated very tactfully' (MO File Report 1882 – Fortnightly Bulletin (13)). The provision of welfare officers especially where there were large numbers of Irish female workers was, as Jennifer Redmond has pointed out, was not entirely

pastoral or indeed altruistic, as numbers of those, of all nationalities, leaving work due to poor conditions and homesickness was detrimental to the war effort (Redmond, 2018, p. 213).

Religion also highlighted difference in the factories where workers noted the piety of Irish labourers in work encampments and remarked on 'scapulars and holy pictures' and the deduction from wages to pay for a priest to come and say weekly Mass (12/12/1941, *TNA, INF 1/293*). Workers tended to conditionally accept their faith because the Irish workers were, 'with very few exceptions…moral in outlook' but 'even inclined to smugness' (MO File Report 1496 - Tube Investments Ltd, 1942). The Protestant faith of Ulster Irish workers was never, as far as this study can tell, remarked upon in MO or HI reports and no question existed about the national status of persons from Northern Ireland, who, as United Kingdom Nationals, possessed all the rights any British national could claim in Great Britain. Though Eire citizens in Britain were also British citizens, though not in Irish law (TNA, LAB 8/1528, p. 2), it appears that, in the factories there was little distinction between North and Southern Irish, all were referred to as 'Irishmen' as if they are from the same country, and often as though they shared the same Irish 'character'.

5.6 INTEGRATION

Holmes argues the widening of areas of Irish employment and its geographical spread outside the cities, may indicate a tendency towards integration and incorporation of the Irish into British society, but continuing hostility towards the Irish, which did not always discriminate between North and South, should not be ignored (Holmes, 1988, p. 178). Throughout this studies sources there is evidence not only of poor integration at work, where the nationalities do not mix, but also of discrimination against Irish workers. On the 'Tube Investments' factory floor it was plain that national groups tended to keep to themselves, with the Irish 'girls' distrusting local women and the British reciprocated this feeling. The Irish accused the Birmingham women of being miserable, who'd 'crack their faces' if they smiled, or ignorant and two-faced, while the Birmingham women said the Irish were too 'fond of each other's company, and rarely make friends with any but their compatriots' (MO File Report 1496 - Tube Investments Ltd, 1942). A

factory welfare officer remarked on the isolation of Irish workers, while trying to explain that she, or billet owners, had little to complain of, commenting that she felt 'sorry for them left in a corner of the canteen here while I'm called away…' (31/08/1943, MO File Report 1882 – Fortnightly Bulletin (13)), leaving the reader in no doubt that there was no mixing between the groups over lunch. Integration into the community was made harder by billeting that infringed the privacy of both parties. Some of the 'Tubes' 'girls are comfortable in their billets, but the majority are discontented and unhappy…considerable friction is often caused by a girl finding she is expected to spend her whole private life, and often share a bed, with a complete stranger' (01/11/1941, MO File Report 1496 - Tube Investments Ltd, 1942). A lack of communication also caused many problems, from disagreements over provision of food in lodgings (31/07/42, MO File Report 1344 - People in Production, 1942) to arguments over payment and the suitability of the work (MO File Report 1882 – Fortnightly Bulletin (13)); *MO File Report 1344 - People in Production*, 1942). However, integration was urged on Irish workers in one important respect, where 'A newcomer is solemnly warned against working too hard; "We don't do too much. They don't pay you for doing too much"' (MO File Report 1496 - Tube Investments Ltd, 1942).

Whilst the Irish workers at 'Tube Investments' were female and worked in a predominantly female environment, most male Irish workers worked in construction. Though these suffered from prejudice they appear less personally affected by it and mixed better into the workforce they joined. Postal censorship shows many reports of Irish workers feeling welcome in the building trade, with some professing Britain 'a great country to work in', that 'if I had thought it was so grand here, I would have been here years ago', and arguing they were now in better company than they were at home (15/01/1943, TNA, CJ 4/30). Those reviewing the Irish post concluded that, in 500 out of 538 letters checked, the writers showed 'strong pro-British feeling' and revealed Irish labourers felt well treated, by the British people rather than the British government (01/02/1943, TNA, CJ 4/30). Yet in reports on British opinion there were many instances of friction between 'drunk Irish navvies' and locals, and only infrequent evidence of occasional improvement in relations with local people (12/12/1941, *TNA, INF 1/293*). This is

perhaps an indication that the British were genial towards the Irish themselves, but ultimately less so when citing their feelings to other observers.

In general, male Irish workers employed in construction were billeted in work camps built for purpose, apart from the civilian population. As we have seen there was evidence that Irish building labourers were considered drunks prone to violence, but a lengthy MO report titled 'Demolition in London' goes further in depicting these men as part of an under-class unable to get better work, 'sometimes represented (as) the last step in a man's degradation' (MO File Report 768 - Demolition in London, 1941). Here the work culture included racial discrimination excused as happening in an 'atmosphere of comradeship…(where) there is no end of banter' (MO File Report 768 - Demolition in London, 1941). Though some Irishmen were 'excellent workers', and 'most of the gangers on these jobs were Irish and were admirable…', they were still regarded as foreigners, suffering racism typified by 'racialised designations', such as the 'negro Sam' and 'Irishman Paddy'. For the report writer this was 'a much milder form of racialism which does not really deserve the title…it is not dangerous, for it exists only in private' (MO File Report 768 - Demolition in London, 1941), as if excusing the problem went some way towards solving it. Though acknowledging other 'very objectionable' examples of racism, the report concludes such incidents were not generally the norm., arguing that 'foreigners of every race', including negroes, Chinese, Indians, Czechs, and German Jews, are welcomed in an atmosphere where not only race but class 'is reduced to a paltry obstacle' (MO File Report 768 - Demolition in London, 1941).

However, the report clearly shows discrimination that needed only a spark to grow to a greater ferocity. Demolition workers in 1941 continued to suffer the same prejudices as their forbears in the previous century, but suffered a more insidious racism, which, coupled with ignorance of the age-old 'Irish Question', effectively allowed assumptions of untrustworthiness, duplicity, and incompetence to be accepted. Assimilation and tolerance was merely professed until it was expedient that it be discarded. After the war Irish representatives found that the level of welfare and social provision by the MOL in the workplace was 'surprising' (Daly, 2006, p.

270), and a member of the Connolly Association[62] argued 'there is no race-hatred here… (where none) have any time for any fascist propaganda' (Dooley, 1943, p. 7), it was more frequent that difference was foremost in British minds as soon as any level of disagreement was raised[63]. Not only had prejudice made integration of the new workers harder, the institutional process within which these workers were imported made easy integration less likely. With such attitudes and institutional bureaucratic officiousness, it is unsurprising that, at the time of the 'Tubes' report, for the Irish imported workers there, 'the average duration of employment was three months' (MO File Report 1496 - Tube Investments Ltd, 1942). As Holmes has suggested, it may have been that Irish workers integrated enough to be able to make a peaceful living in Britain most of the time, they did not integrate into British society, tending to create their own communities and identities and thus remaining outsiders.

5.7 ORGANISED RECRUITMENT

The process by which the Irish workers were imported was deeply affected by existing prejudices and contemporary public sensibilities. Though it was widely known that Britain was reliant on imported labour, it was still resented that 'the Ministry of Labour imports these men' and adjudged there should be 'some form of control and inspection' (25/3/1941, *TNA, INF1/292)*, proving the public unconvinced by the recruitment controls in place. Cabinet members and the Military shared public concern over security and the social impact of the influx. As a result, recruitment policy, and its implementation, became progressively more regimented and bureaucratic. The 'official history' of Irish workers in Britain was commissioned from historian A.V. Judges who was forced, by the MoL, to preface his account with an endorsement that 'the

[62] The Connolly Association was at this time devoted to campaigning for a united, independent, and socialist Ireland based on the principles of the 1916 risings Citizen Army leader James Connolly. Throughout the war the Association took great interest, through Trade Unionism, on the welfare of Irish workers in Britain

[63] MO report 'Tubes' contains an example of the amplification of difference and a most stunning lack of tact. The Lord Mayor of Birmingham 'joked' to the workers 'An Irishman and a nigger agreed to have a fight. They said that they would fight until one of them cried "Enough"! After two hours the nigger cried: "Enough!" The Irishman replied "Faith, that's the word I've trying to think of for the last hour and a half!'. After some laughter from the crowd 'without exception the Irish girls were very much annoyed stating 'he shouldn't have done it…' (*MO File Report 1496 - Tube Investments Ltd*, 1942)

narrative is not intended for publication in its present form', was for consumption in the UK only, and that 'no use should be made by the War Historians of any matter reflecting on Anglo-Irish relations without first consulting the Manpower section' (TNA, LAB 8/1528). The embargo reflected the potential for embarrassment to both countries involved; Eire could have been accused of an 'unneutral' policy, and Britain exposed as unacceptably reliant on a country to which she was diplomatically opposed. Judges detailed history was unpublished and official histories of wartime production gave only a general acknowledgement of the Irish role without indicating the depth of contemporary controversy[64]. The report represented how the MoL balanced the need for Irish labour against the prejudices against it and explains the guiding principles behind the MOL decisions. It also shows what Kenneth Lunn has called 'a repeated pattern of both hostility and eagerness to employ the Irish' (Lunn, 1993, p. 108).

In in the first nine months of the war there were no restrictions on travel between Great Britain and Ireland, only starting in June 1940 by which time Blitzkrieg in the West had increased general fears of fifth column menace and invasion. Before this time the War Cabinet was divided, with Churchill opining 'there are plenty of Irish traitors in the Glasgow area ....' (Gilbert, 1993a, p. 71) and Eden arguing the Irish emigrated 'in order to better their condition and not because they sympathise' with the UK government (20/11/1939, TNA, CAB 67/2/53) or the IRA. However, there was a generalised feeling in government that some Irish 'would behave as a menace in any conceivable circumstances' (TNA, LAB 8/1528, p. 3). After Dunkirk, however, the War Cabinet previously forced to accept that any travel scheme would not 'remove all risk...(but) recruitment of labour from Eire cannot be discontinued in the interests of national food supply' (12/6/1940, TNA, CAB 67/6/47), and mindful that Britain was also forced to rely on Garda Siochana screening, instituted new controls on all immigration. However, these had to be almost immediately relaxed in the case of Ireland as it became clear the regular supply of seasonal

[64] See Inman, who summed up the Irish contribution as 30,000 of the total 2 million British munitions workers (Inman, 1957, p. 174) and, later, Holmes arguing the Irish provided an important supplement of mobile workers not previously available to the Ministry of Labour (Holmes, 1988, p. 177) but neither elaborate.

Irish agricultural workers was affected, with special six-month agriculture only visa's being introduced which kept holders away from sites of military importance (TNA, LAB 8/1528, pp. 5-6). Later a system of travel permits, designed to allow in only those vouched for by the Irish police, ensured necessity would trump the supposed effect on national security[65]. The dichotomous dynamics of the system was described as inherently 'Irish' by Judges (TNA, LAB 8/1528, p. 3), where Britain was forced to welcome Irish labour but at the same time begrudge it's necessity. Indeed, as the Ministry of labour made concessions on Temporary Agricultural Irish Immigration, the JIC was arguing that, though there had been 'little if any' sabotage whilst building aerodromes for the Eastern Command, this did not necessarily mean there would not be, and advocated that 'all aliens and Irish be cleared out' of the area (May 1940, TNA, CAB 81/87). The dichotomy may have seemed 'Irish', but it was allowed to continue by the British government, with unproven expectation affecting policy at all turns.

By June 1941, however, after conscription in both NI and of Irish citizens in the UK was concluded not worth the trouble it could cause, the Ministry of Labour pressed for a substantial increase in Irish recruitment. Despite continued opposition on security grounds, it was agreed that the demand for labour was so great that the risk should be tolerated, if recruitment was organized with governmental oversight. However, Irish workers were kept from employment on the sensitive southern coast (Inman, 1957, p. 139) until the last year of the war. To secure the desperately needed workers, the guiding principle of controlled recruitment was to find recruits 'with the minimum of publicity to allow for plausible denial by the Irish government, so protective of its neutrality' (Inman, 1957, p. 170). However, this did not make Irish workers popular and, as Inman noted, many industries, especially those involved with military production, were reluctant to employ them (Inman, 1957, p. 139). Observers in Eire indicated that there was a large pool of workers available to British production eager to travel if they would only be allowed home leave (A A Mowat, 30/9/1942, TNA, DO 130/28), while another argued in Britain that British

[65] Contemporaneously the Irish government had, under Emergency legislation, started to intern IRA members and sympathisers.

employment would be ‘a most excellent piece of propaganda’ which could change Irish opinions of Britain (McDonnell, 6/2/1942, TNA, DO 130/28). Meanwhile, Toms, MOL liaison to the Dublin recruitment office, adjudged that ‘the majority of the recruiting agents adopted a superior attitude and assumed they had a right to run roughshod over Eire regulations, and seemed to interpret them as being instituted for anti-British reasons’ (TNA, LAB 8/1528, p. 28), reflecting common prejudices. Government attitudes were only different in tone, being couched in more diplomatic terms, to those of the public and resultant policy was driven more by necessity.

The initial processes of recruitment were confusing and unnerving for the Irish workers due to often haphazard organization. The private agents already recruiting in Eire before government control of the practice, were acknowledged as using questionable practices and bribes, which caused resentment by colleagues as well as British and Irish government agencies (TNA, LAB 8/1528, p. 9). In addition to the temptation to cut corners is gaining much needed recruits, agents were not above lying or at least bending the truth on wages and conditions, especially building and civil engineering agents who made exaggerated promises about wages and conditions of work which employers were unable to fulfil (TNA, LAB 8/1528, p. 22). This caused problems for the receiving employers who must placate Irish workers annoyed that ‘they tell you anything to get you over here, and once you're here, they refuse to give you your passport back’ (MO File Report 1496 - Tube Investments Ltd, 1942). In addition to deceits, travel arrangements often went wrong. After an application process that included twenty-one separate stages of action, to be followed in sequence, some workers arrived in Britain totally unexpected or did not arrive at all. Some travellers were left at the docks with no idea of where they were to go, some travelled without provision of food or money for expenses and ended up seeking help from the authorities. One volunteer is quoted by Judges as saying ‘We had a terrible time coming here…. if I could have got back, I would have run!’ (TNA, LAB 8/1528, p. 41). After being treated either under haphazard early conditions, or later under an almost militarised process, neither under the traveller’s control, it was unsurprising that many workers felt unwelcome or as

if they had been fooled into a situation that was not as they expected. Few of those receiving these workers knew of their travails along the way and some undoubtedly assumed them ungrateful.

The processes of recruitment were later streamlined as it became clear the previous process was not retaining those employed. Need for medical inspection drove this change as many British people would not house Irish workers. The effect of medical checks and 'de-lousing' was insulting to the workers and many 'would flatly refuse to part with their clothes for disinfestation' (TNA, LAB 8/1528, p. 36) with many no doubt reminded of stories of the 'coffin ships' of the 1840's, overcrowded, typhus-ridden transports from Famine Ireland (TNA, LAB 8/1528, p. 43). The new processes included segregation of Irish workers onto separate and dedicated transportation, and this, though designed to simplify the recruitment process, only added to feelings of distrust. By 1944 the recruitment process was so streamlined as to as to almost commoditise the workers, who were centrally recruited, medically examined, de-loused, put on their own boat-trains and sent directly to their workplace for billeting in shared accommodation with strangers. In return it was expected that the Irish recruits were employed on the same terms as British law provided. As Judges argued, 'recruitment and distribution of labour was now collectivised and completely institutionalised' (TNA, LAB 8/1528, p. 71). This often led to Irish workers, unaccustomed to Britain, becoming uncomfortable and suspicious enough to fear the situation they were now in, subject to an almost militarised operation, away from home in a country that was not always friendly. The Judges report notes on of the Dublin Ministry of Labour officers opinion that 'Quite a real source of trouble was the suspicion for which some of the Irish had for us all... (though) almost always very polite and deferential (compared with English workers) … (they) clearly felt themselves in a foreign and slightly hostile country' (TNA, LAB 8/1528). The streamlining of the recruitment process had more to do with British utility than allaying the fears and concerns of the Irish workers and had only marginally bettered the experience of those coming to Britain earlier.

Employers, often culturally opposed to employing Irish workers but forced by necessity, admitted that 'apart from sheer prejudice and the anxieties of employers on security grounds,

there was a variety hindrances created by differing habits and social customs' (TNA, LAB 8/1528). Correspondence to the MoL shows many letters complaining of the 'quality' and 'ability' of Irish workers, and two, from the same company, stand out as particularly unbending in their assumptions. A Welfare Officer of the London Public Transportation Board wrote to the MoL, demanding assurance that any further Irish staff sent to his canteen would be 'a satisfactory type, capable of performing the duties' required, before complaining of three Irish workers recently sent to him. Generally criticising their arithmetic and reading abilities, their appearance, cleanliness and health, the officer argued one was so filthy, rather than most obviously suffering from poverty, as to be impossible to employ in a kitchen[66]. Another was described, by way of 'both appearance and intelligence', as incapable of doing anything but the roughest work (20/04/1945, TNA, LAB 8/966). The officer did not appear to consider that the provision of training or uniform might ameliorate some of the problems presented. A second letter shows these three were sent back to Dublin, having been deemed 'unplaceable in any other employment', before exposing the mentality of its writer, who dismissed another Irish woman who had 'demanded' a travel pass and the cost of her travel home. The writer argued that, as he had not seen her unaccompanied by a sailor, he expected that 'the girl would eventually find some means of paying her own fare back' (27/04/1945, TNA, LAB 8/966). That the writer could assume that he could divest himself of all responsibility for an employee because of her perceived morality attests to a largely preconceived set of notions of what Irish women deserved in life. Indeed, the possibility of accommodating her insecurities did not seem to occur to this writer, as it also appeared in the case of the Scots farmers who, when angered by the ease with which Irish workers could leave their employ, suggested that they instead be compelled to work 'under the provisions of the Essential works' (31/12/1941, *TNA, INF1/292*), rather than be incentivised further. Some, it seems, felt the Irish should be grateful for the positions no matter the working conditions.

[66] The Officers main complaint about this woman was that she had 'no skirt, only a piece of sacking pinned round her waist, nor had she any luggage but a very small attaché case containing a jumper' (*TNA, LAB 8/966*).

However, there were occasions when the sensibilities of the Irish were accommodated, and as a result the Irish workers adapted well to their new situation. MO reports occasions where Irish workers were treated with respect enough to encourage them to stay in Britain, most notably in 'Tube Investments Ltd', a report on factory industrial conditions (MO File Report 1496 - Tube Investments Ltd, 1942) where the Welfare Officer was successful in adapting working conditions for the Irish workers. Another notes that despite the 'Irish girls…(being)…one of her (the assistant to the chief Welfare Officer) chief problems', the officer had coped well with them and had received the Irish workers appreciation (31/08/1943, MO File Report 1882 – Fortnightly Bulletin (13)). However, HI revealed that, though the Irish workers had a favourable view towards their British colleagues, British workers were in general critical of the Irish on account of 'their rowdy behaviour and their presence in England being the result of Eire's neutral position' (*TNA, INF 1/293*). The journey to Britain by Irish workers was to be smoothed by works welfare officers, but nevertheless these often inferred that many problems they dealt with were due to their charge's character, rather than the dislocation the immigrants felt (03/12/1941, MO Diarist 5100; MO File Report 1344 - People in Production, 1942). A personnel manager's MO diary berates a jilted bride wanting to return to Derry for wasting his time, rather than accepting that this was part of his job. A few days later, he dismisses the thought of employing an Irish girl 'who looks intelligent enough to be trained' based on her nationality (MO File Report 1344 - People in Production, 1942). A more understanding Welfare Officer reported 'We've only had one or two complaints from landladies about dirt and drunkenness', but notes "But that's what I'm here for', though the attitude of others evidently hampered her role when '(some) weren't treated very tactfully…, and their Irish pride was aroused so they took the release' (MO File Report 1882 – Fortnightly Bulletin (13)). Their billets in Birmingham were sometimes of a good standard but some Irish workers complained they had little privacy, poor washing facilities, and inedible food, where provided. Some houses were large and filled with workers, male and female, which caused many Irish women to feel unsafe (01/11/1942, MO File Report 1496 - Tube Investments Ltd, 1942). Some were forced to live alongside the family in their billets and felt an 'unwelcome intruder', encouraged to leave the house as much as possible. Many would have preferred a hostel, which

the ‘Tubes’ officer tried to organise a hostel and club for Irish workers. Though the MoL also expressed interest in using hostels or works related clubs as part of the streamlining of the recruitment process (TNA, LAB 8/1528), in this case, it was never to come to fruition.

Only one ‘Irish Club’ for female immigrant workers appears to have come to fruition because of the MOL concern over recruitment and retention of Irish workers. Henrietta Ewart argues the Selly Oak Irish Girls Club, Birmingham, formed in 1943 was considered a success, due to a membership of around 100, even though this represented only 8% of the local Irish female workforce and 25 of 26 ‘lost’ members had not returned after a Christmas visits home, despite the clubs activities (Ewart, 2012, pp. 257-263). Even here contemporary assessment of the club reflects public concerns and expectation. The Birmingham Local Welfare Officer noted the club was marked by the ‘noise’ of the socializing, although there was also no ‘rowdyism’, presumably a relief of her own or societal expectation. The girls were judged of ‘a steady and a good type’ but were not being attracted by any other clubs’, perhaps reflecting a degree of homesickness offset only by the sharing of mutual experiences away from home. The issue of illegitimate pregnancy was also discussed in reports to the Ministry even though this area of the clubs work was miniscule in comparison to the rest of its activities, aiding only two women who may not have been members. As Ewart argues, the Selly Oak club is an example of what motivated welfare officers on the ground could achieve, but also its efficacy in reducing loss to the workforce is impossible to judge (Ewart, 2012, pp. 257-263). However, well intentioned as it may have been, the club was judged by behaviour it managed to avoid rather than what it achieved. The use of hostels or clubs was proposed where the Irish girls were ‘much of a type’, fond of each other’s company, insular and unwilling to mix with local people (MO File Report 1496 - Tube Investments Ltd, 1942). Lack of acculturation through accommodation only added to feelings of cultural difference and did little to change British opinion on racial stereotypes.

Distrust against the Irish continued, especially in work on government contracts right up to the end of the war despite Irish workers being given Admiralty clearance to work in Southampton shipyards, in 1943, provided they did not deal with ‘invasion barges or work in

connection with landing operations (TNA, LAB 8/694). A few weeks later, Portsmouth dockyard desperate for labour, was denied recruits from Eire: 'the Admiralty have had to decide that the security objections outweigh even the labour supply difficulties' (TNA, LAB 8/694). Despite no cases of sabotage or attack by IRA sympathisers, it was considered too dangerous to employ Irish workers on projects involved in the re-invasion of Europe right until the end of the war. Additionally, those Irish who worked on shipyards away from the south coast were distinctly unappreciated with reports that Cammell Laird Shipyards were keen to 'send the Irishmen packing' as soon as the war was over (01/05/1945, TNA, CAB 24/197). Indeed, as the war ended a distinction was made between the contributions of the Irish volunteers to the British Armed Forces and immigrant workers, with reciprocal unemployment benefits awarded to Irish former soldiers in Eire but none to Irish workers who returned home. Though national insurance payments, less benefits drawn were returned to the Eire government, unemployment insurance was not on the grounds that civilian workers were mercenary in their reasons for volunteering, whereas those that joined the military had rejected their government's neutrality in volunteering to fight in the UK forces (Wolf, 1975, p. 21). It also became clear that Irish workers would continue to be necessary to Britain to aid post-war reconstruction, and refusal to pay unemployment would mean many would stay for work and fewer would draw their benefits if they had gone home. The dichotomy of the necessity of Irish labour versus resentment of their employment was set to continue for years to come.

5.8 CONCLUSIONS

Most perceptions of Irish immigrant workers were affected by the dichotomy represented by the dire necessity for workers alongside public distrust of their motivations. To suspicion of their potential as subversive elements was added a cultural expectation of detrimental social impact, and fear that they would be used to replace men who could be conscripted into the forces. The number of these Irish immigrants was difficult to determine due to a combination of the problems caused by the CTA and disputed Irish nationality, as well as the porous nature of the NI

border and an inexact system of travel permits, despite attempts by both governments to regulate supply and demand for these workers. These unknowns only added to unease at the influx of Irish workers. Most female Irish workers joined an already stressful factory working environment in which gripes, concerns and resentments grew alongside production targets and extending working hours. By 1941 more than half of the workers in 160 factories polled were working a fifty-five-hour week and despite attempts to lower this rate just under half of women workers were working typically a fifty-five- or sixty-hour week in 1944 (Parker, 1957, pp. 444-445). Such conditions led to the kind of malaise which exacerbated absenteeism, petty squabbles, and industrial action, aside from creating a generalised feeling of being 'browned-off', which tended to 'prove' age-old stereotypes in the case of the Irish. Male Irish workers tended to work in construction and demolition which also created similar pressures, although many would have been previously acclimatised to long hours and hard, physical work. In these circumstances industrial unrest could easily have been expected without pressures brought about by the exigencies of war, but a pattern of worsening attitudes towards Irish immigrant workers progressed through out the war, and as the number of Irish workers employed rose.

Initial controversy over the employment of Irish workers was influenced by pre-war concerns that Irish people were employed while many natives were unemployed. The 1939 IRA S-Plan campaign, which had prompted many attempts to register Irish people in Britain, and concerns that Irish workers were simultaneously mercenary and a drain on resources, combined to create gnawing resentment in the workforce. This resentment did not affect government policy in the first nine months of the war, but after the Fall of France a system of travel permits, largely reliant on Eire's governance and intelligence, was instituted. Neutrality was rarely a consideration in feeling against Irish immigration, due to a misplaced assumption that Eire could be persuaded or coerced into war, until November 1940 when de Valera made it clear that the Treaty Ports would not be given to any belligerent. Neutrality would later combine with other resentment at the Irish stealing British jobs thereafter.

Popular belief that the Irish immigrants were working for mercenary motives tended to de-politicise both their motivation and their perceived effect on society, and this contributed to an invisibility which slowly dissolved as more Irish workers were imported until the height of their numbers in 1944. From 1941 this slow expansion grew fears that Irish workers were being favoured by government through the MOL. Many were concerned that Irish workers were better paid, had better conditions, and were unfairly excluded from conscription, and the levels of animosity grew along with the steady increase in their number. Additionally, a culture of secrecy involved in O'Drisceoil's 'double game' (O'Drisceoil, 1996, p. 292) contributed to the culture where unabated growth of rumour could occur. Though some regarded these workers as the vanguard of future peaceful Anglo-Irish collaboration, most felt them a threat, especially so on government and defence contract work. Resentment grew to a flashpoint at the introduction of a travel ban to the whole of Ireland leading up to the D-Day landings, where suspicion of information leakage by travelling workers created the opinion that such action by the British government had been long overdue. Reaction was later sparked by de Valera's condolences on Hitler's death which prompted calls for the expulsion of Irish workers who would not disown de Valera's action. Post-war assessments of the impact of information leakages state some occurred but that these were 'of little value and more often than not incorrect' (O'Halpin, 2003, pp. 47,52; TNA, KV 4/9) and both MI5 and Eunan O'Halpin have agreed that 'the enemy had no organised intelligence service in Eire' (TNA, KV 4/9) and that 'the opportunity for to do so was open' (O'Halpin, 2003, p. 60).

Many felt the outpouring of money returned to Eire by workers in Britain amounted to the British people upholding the Eire economy, and that Eire was profiting from being neutral. Some also saw no real benefit to Britain in employing these workers, and some even proposed the erosion of their rights by denying access to voting rights, medical aid, accommodation, and poor relief. Irish workers were frequently considered vectors of disease and vermin, as well as being unhygienic and filthy refused by those expected to billet them in their homes. The MOL attempts to ameliorate these problems revealed that such problems were few, but the public

reaction to them was out of all proportion to their number. The Welfare Officers appointed to ease the dislocation and problems encountered by Irish workers, in general, worked well to keep their charges at work, but a few did accept prejudicial assessments of the 'Irish character' to explain the problems that did arise. Though government organisations were generally happy with the help and actions of the Irish government regarding Irish workers, an ugly undercurrent of opinion remained arguing that their worth as workers outweighed the cost of their use.

Irish workers were often charged with the same stereotypical behaviour as had their forbears in Victorian times. In addition to being felt unhygienic the Irish were also charged with drunkenness, a charge which in general followed Irish male construction workers and these accusations achieved undue prominence. Also charged with absenteeism this was unlikely to be at higher levels than that of the general factory working population, but this may have been given undue prominence because Irish workers had the opportunity, in grants of home leave, to escape wartime conditions by going to Neutral Eire. Irish female workers were affected by assumptions as to their national character alongside their gender. Aside from being described as 'a nuisance', alongside native female workers, the Irish women were infantilised, and considered needy or attention seeking, and invariably described by male and female co-workers, welfare officers and the MO report writers as 'girls'. This was not, however, a purely British attitude as the Irish Government encouraged Catholic Welfare agencies to act in the interests of all Irish migrants, though these invariably showed much greater interest in women (Daly, 2006, p. 278). Post-war Irish governmental analysis also judged Irish female migrant workers as coming from the lower classes and reported British attitudes that they were 'either very good or very bad; there was no in between' (Daly, 2006, p. 283). Irish women could not escape the judgement of others for being Irish and female, though being pregnant afforded the most opprobrium from all sides (Daly, 2006, pp. 285-286).

As a result of such judgements and perceptions, there was a pattern of poor integration of Irish workers into the working community, despite the efforts of the MoL, recruiters and welfare officers. Irish workers tended to keep to their own kind and where mixing of nationalities occurred

it was often accompanied by arguments which started due to the attitudes and prejudices of the native workers. What integration occurred in terms of *conditional* acceptance, where the Irish were accepted where there was no competition for jobs, higher pay, or conditions. As a result, many Irish found a safe space in employment where they were accepted, but in conditions where native workers felt themselves slighted, anger and discrimination would emerge. Male Irish workers tended to be less estranged from British co-workers because of a camaraderie built around hard-work within a team of workplace 'gangers', and shared worksite camp accommodation, though they were not immune from occasional, and sometimes violent, resentment. Female workers were often further removed from their native fellow-workers by keeping their own company, being accommodated in either private billets or in their own groups made from friends made on the job. As Delaney has argued, it is hard to gauge levels of integration through outward manifestations (Delaney, 2000, p. 139), and argues oral testimonies show the Irish were not subject to 'overt hostility' (Delaney, 2000, p. 145), it is useful to note that these contemporary sources show overt hostility, but they are not necessarily being aimed at the Irish themselves. These hostile comments are being related to British observers, who, by way of shared culture, may also subscribe to some of these attitudes, or at least will not react as badly, or potentially with as much hostility, as an Irish observer. The British observer, through this mechanic will always hear more of true feelings than the object of the prejudice. These contemporary and mostly confidential sources are likelier to reveal more true, subjective, feeling and attitudes than other sources.

The dichotomy involved in the use of Irish workers in wartime Britain also created a situation hurtful to the pride of the British; where the government had to negotiate with a newly formed country, once under its total control, now a self-determining Dominion. Expected acquiescence was not forthcoming and the British government found it no longer necessary to assuage the Irish government's concerns to facilitate Irish migration, as the end of the Atlantic war meant workers could be accessed from other sources. Resultant policy towards Eire became both more combative and dismissive. Unemployment benefits would not be paid to those Irish

workers who had returned to Eire, and reciprocal benefits were only given to those Irish who had served in the British Forces. This policy resulted in many of those who travelled to Britain staying after the end of the war to work on reconstruction projects. The 'double game' also allowed British policy to effectively dismiss the contribution of Irish workers to the British economy by supressing its official history, thereby avoiding unpleasant truths about British reliance on Irish workers. This uncomfortable history did not square with the emerging myth of the 'People's War', which cast Britain as the lone, lasting bulwark against Nazism from summer 1940. As a result, popular perceptions of Irish conduct during the war easily merged with long-standing prejudices to create the opinion that by standing aloof from the war, Eire had no part in it, making no contribution, if not a negative, troublesome one. The effect of British policy in ignoring the Irish contribution and afterwards castigating and punishing Eire for her neutrality, was in fact to make it most likely that most of the workers invited during the war would stay, despite continued ill-feeling over neutrality. An 'Irish' outcome if ever there was one.

6 THE IRISH IN THE BRITISH FORCES

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The role of Irish men and women in the British Forces in World War Two is contested in several ways, not least due to difficulty in assessing their numbers. An exact figure is impossible to determine for several reasons, including the contested definitions of Irish nationality. Legally Britain regarded Eire citizens as British citizens, and the British Army, historically multi-cultural, did not record the nationality of its soldiers, nor did it distinguish between Northern and Southern Irish. Indeed, contemporary documents and reports often reflect British conceptions by conflating British and Irish as one nationality[67]. The Irish in the British Forces often embraced multiple identities, displaying allegiance to their comrades and the crown, as well as their homeland. Most importantly, by 1939 independent Ireland had only existed for eighteen years, and its people were still accommodating secession from the Union. Irish identity and nationality were therefore conceptually mutable, and often best defined by the individual. Additionally, it suited both the British and Eire governments that the number of Irish people in the British Forces was not publicized. The Irish State could not acknowledge the contribution of these men and women, as doing so might compromise fragile neutrality (Lunn, 1993, p. 102) and the British government, though welcoming additional recruitment, officially took care not to compromise further enlistment by official criticism of Irish neutrality. As a result of secrecy and dearth of detailed records, estimates of Irish people in the British Forces vary from 50,000 to 165,000 (T. Connolly, 2000, p. 53). Contemporary estimates are often dubious, but two attempts at finding a more evidence-based figure are the most reliable. Official Dominions Office figures, released in 1945 to forestall supposed attempts by the Irish state to mitigate Irish neutrality[68], have the advantage

[67] For example, in Mass Observations 1945 File Report 2286 on Prisoners of War, shows 77% of interviewed British POW's were from the UK or Eire, whilst the other Dominions were awarded a separate percentage.

[68] This was an official reaction to 'self-justification' of Irish neutrality by the publication of 'inaccurate and exaggerated claims as to Eire's contribution to the United Kingdom war effort' in several newspapers worldwide (*TNA, DO 35/1230*). Here Maffey condescendingly characterises the highest suggested figures as part of 'a delusion as harmless as George IV's belief that he took part in the Battle of Waterloo'.

of being produced by an authority with direct access to recruitment records, though these are still subject to a degree of estimation (see Table 1).

DO 35/1230	Eire	Northern Ireland
Army & RAF – Men	37,440	37,579
Army & RAF - Women	4,520	3,081
Royal Navy	3,000	3,000
Merchant Navy (estimated)	500	500
Total	47,450	44,160

Table 1 Irish Servicemen DO 35/1230 (O'Halpin, 2003, p. 32)

Taking evidence of Irish birth to denote nationality, and assuming Irish combatants died at the same rate as others, Yvonne McEwen has used Commonwealth War Graves Commission evidence to arrive at the most analytically reliable figure for Army service (see Table 2). That these two sets of figures are not wildly different lends some degree of believability, yet it is also indicative of ignorance at the contribution of Irish volunteers that McEwen's serious independent analysis of the numbers involved did not take place until 2004.

Yvonne McEwen	Eire	Northern Ireland
Irish Soldiers in the British Army in WW2	50,644	49,302

Table 2 Irish in the British Army extrapolated from CWGC records (McEwen, 2004, p. 83)

6.2 SOURCES

Due to the invisibility of the Irish contribution, existing contemporary sources are infrequent, not least because of the security implications of allowing soldiers to write diaries or send uncensored letters while in service. Doubtless the fact that Irish soldiers rarely served together, and even 'Irish' brigades and regiments contained only a minority of Irish soldiers, also meant Irish identity was often subsumed by that of the regiment or brigade. Indeed, surviving

wartime diaries of those in Irish regiments often betray no sense of Irish identity or mention any Irish personnel (Ager, 1942, IWM), and one diary by Irish Guardsman W.A. Simpson (Simpson, 1944, IWM) only mentions pride in fellow Guardsman Kenneally VC, whose history illuminates the pitfalls of assuming the national identity of many British soldiers[69]. It was rare that Irish identity trumped regimental identity for serving soldiers, adding to their invisibility. Additionally, the Irish volunteers had no spokesman representing them in the political sphere at home, and often had only the mercurial Churchill speaking for them in Britain, lionising their contribution to the British Forces while at the same time vilifying their government and leaders. This distinction between personal deeds and state policy implied that the Irish government ill-lead, and deliberately miss-informed its citizens into accepting neutrality. The distinction implied state policy, and those following it, were dishonourable[70], though many in the Forces disagreed. This distinction caused confusion in Britain, with Dominions Secretary Lord Cranborne's admission that 'many Irishmen who are gallantly in the Armed Forces of the crown, nevertheless believed that Mr de Valera was right to maintain neutrality', yet still felt their views 'curious' (*TNA, CAB 65/39/22*). This typified many peoples struggles to accept Irish motivations.

Yet evidence of the Irish contribution, and British attitudes towards it, appears in censorship reports on letters home, the occasional diary in military archives, letters to newspapers and other government papers. However, reflecting the lack of public awareness of the Irish in the British Forces, reports on public opinion, such as Mass Observation (MO) and Home Intelligence (HI) show little appreciation. The subject simply does not arise in the MO 1939 Race survey, and comments during the war, such as the suggestion that news of IRA activity may have been censored by the British government (15/11/39, *MO Diarist 5406*), often indicate the continued acceptance of stereotypical concepts of 'Irishness', and ignorance of the contribution of Irish

[69] Leslie Jackson used the identity papers of Irish seasonal worker 'John Patrick Kenneally' to join the Irish Guards, after serving military detention under them as part of the Honourable Artillery Company. The truth of his English and Jewish ancestry did not emerge until after the war (Condell, 07/11/2000).
[70] The film 'The Halfway House' similarly draws the conclusion that fighting in the forces makes the Irishman honourable – the film records an Irishman's conversion from supporter of neutrality to soldier in the British Forces (Dearden, 1944)

volunteers to the British Forces and immigrant workers. News of the contributions made by Irish people was rare.

6.3 Irish Identity and the British Forces

Historical associations, of course, impacted on Irish identity, not least because of Unionist and Nationalist allegiances. Notwithstanding these, many embraced a dual identity, most notably the 'Anglo-Irish', a mainstay of the officer class of the British Army, represented by professional soldiers like Montgomery, Alan Brooke, Alexander, and Dill. This class was augmented by volunteers from Eire who felt allegiance to the new Irish state yet joined the Allied cause. As Bernard Kelly argues, 'Irish people could have multiple loyalties – to the Allies, to London, to their regiments, to their associations, to their comrades – and still be loyal Irish citizens' (Kelly, 2012, p. 189). RAF fighter pilot Brendan 'Paddy' Finucane was one such Irish volunteer. Born in Dublin of an English mother and Irish father, who had taken part in the Irish revolution, and living in Britain since 1936, Finucane exhibited his Irishness by displaying a shamrock on his Spitfire. Personal papers held at the Imperial War Museum, include letters of condolence on his death from hundreds of admirers, with one notable letter lauding his Irishness and evidencing the co-option of his identity by both Irish and British sources, arguing 'He was a true Gael and never forsook his own land. How galling for you when the press called him a British Ace, an Australian Ace, in fact anything but an Irish ace' (Letter, Finucane, 1943, IWM). Indeed, it was a common assumption that those who fought in the British Forces must have identified with Britain. Some saw a direct link between Southern Irish participation in the British Forces and continued perceived or vestigial claim on British identity. Sir Basil Brooke inferred as much when noting, in 1946, that 'I have heard it said in a boasting manner that Eire men went forward to the war. Of course, they did, but they were our men, they were our people who thought as we did' (Cited in Hennessey, 1997, p. 92). Yet these assumptions were often dispelled. Often Irish volunteers were not simply on the 'British side' but were only on the British side unless the British were 'against

Ireland', with many supporting Irish neutrality, which they saw as a protection for their families at home.

Using the reminiscences of Irish volunteers in the British Forces from the University College Cork Volunteer archives, Bernard Kelly cites that of fifty-five interviewees, twenty-two supported neutrality, thirteen disagreed and sixteen ventured no opinion (Kelly, n.d., p. 15). These sources, oral histories recorded in the late 1990's reflect the problem of remembrances being affected by the passage of time, reflection and subsequent events. The contemporary sources used for this thesis reflect a higher percentage of support for neutrality. Postal censorship reports from troops reveal support for neutrality even during the Travel ban imposed between Britain and Ireland during the preparations for D-Day in 1944. Irish troops 'admit that the ban is understandable but maintain that de Valera's attitude as the leader of a neutral country is strictly correct and that he is acting within his rights' (*TNA, WO 204/10381*), and another, from the same month, quotes 'I am glad that dev. stood out for his policy, but I think you will agree that Churchill was quite fair in his statement on the subject' (*TNA, WO 204/714*). Captain Henry Harrison, a veteran of World War One, spoke for Irish Socialists in Britain at a Connolly clubs conference, saying 'I am a defender of Ireland's neutrality under existing circumstances, but if it were not for my age, I would be fighting against the Germans…But that does not mean in any way that I condemn Ireland for her neutrality…' (Dooley, 1943, p. 11). Some newspapers also acknowledged the attitudes of Irish men in the Forces, but could not, it appears, fully understand it. *The Times* editorial noted 'While most of the large number of Irishmen employed in the British war effort would probably endorse his (de Valera's) policy of neutrality…many of them are opposed to his other policies, which appeal mainly to the more insular stay-at-homes' implying a lack of adventure and worldliness in those that chose not to go to war (*The Times*, 13/05/1944, p.5). These attitudes served to bolster the opinion that the Irish in the Forces were 'our sort' of Irish and identified with British values.

However, most editorial opinion and letters to the editor on this subject, concurred with the belief that those Irish people in the forces had chosen to denounce neutrality by their actions.

Many believed that these men and women, as one editorial put it, 'understand quite well what the trouble is and where it lies. They would not be where they are, did they not feel that their country is following the wrong line of policy' (*Aberdeen Press & Journal,* 12/03/1944, p.5). Additionally, British public attitudes sometimes suggested that Irish political movements acted more out of hatred for Britain than love of Ireland, though some questioned such binary assumptions. A Letter to the Editor of the *Belfast Newsletter* implies anti-Irishness in this assumption by asking if, 'in a future world war the Czechs were to seize the opportunity to stage a rebellion in Prague, would your correspondent...say that their action was inspired by hatred of Germany, or by love of Bohemia?' (Belfast Telegraph, 09/08/1936, p.9).

Conditional loyalty to the British Forces was understandable to the estimated 5,000 NCO's and privates who were AWOL from the Irish army serving with the British forces (Keogh, 1994, p. 123). Recent research by Joseph Quinn has illuminated how this conditional loyalty played out in World War Two. Quinn argues the size of the Irish Defence Forces, though suffering high wastage since the Irish Civil War, continued to decrease until the Fall of France in 1940 necessitated a recruitment drive which brought a draft of 40,000, and membership peaked in June 1941, falling dramatically thereafter (Quinn, 2020, p.8). Coinciding with the Nazi invasion of Russia, Quinn argues this represents the time of highest number of desertions and corresponds with a surge in recruitment from Eire to the British Army and that it is possible that 15% of all Eire recruits to the British Forces were deserters from the Irish Forces (Quinn, 2020, p.9). While Quinn concludes most Irish Army deserters joined the British Forces after June 1941, preferring continued military service (Quinn, 2020, p.23), this interpretation is supported by evidence considered here, including postal censorship reports, letters to newspapers, and diaries. These reflect that Irish people in the forces wanted to protect Ireland while under threat of invasion and were willing to continue to protect Ireland in the British Forces after this threat had passed.

They saw their service as protecting Ireland, however, for British opinion, Irish state neutrality was incompatible with the contribution of Irish people to the British Forces, making the Irish position a paradox. The continuation of the long-standing British cultural stereotype of

the Irish, and the basis of most 'Irish' jokes, the paradoxical stereotype provided an easier way of understanding the motivations of men such as 'a crazy Irishman from Roscommon, a bomber pilot in the RAF…. (with) all the traditional dislike for the British, yet like thousands of other Irishmen he has joined them in this fight against Hitler' (23/11/44, Morris, 1945, IWM). The paradox is frequently used, especially in newspaper editorials and letters to the editor, with the Irish stance portrayed as being 'neutral if she has to fight everyone in Europe' to stay so (Reynolds, 1941, p. 56).

Adding to the confusion for many was the contentious question of military uniform. As Wendy Webster has noted, British uniform conditioned the public response to foreigners, and those wearing a shoulder flash denoting their home country on a British uniform often reported a more positive welcome than foreign civilians (Webster, 2018, p. 52). However, Irish combatants wore no distinctive uniform markers, due to the need to avoid identification as combatants from a neutral country, as well as the state continuing to accord Southern Irish people British citizenship, and it was often only when Irish soldiers spoke that British people knew of their nationality. Yet, the wearing of a British Uniform in Eire became an early concern, and a marker of Irish 'intransigence'. The *Evening Dispatch* noted public disquiet, and sense of insult, at the banning of British uniform, noting that because '(they) prohibit the wearing of belligerent uniforms and intern belligerent combatants', the public felt the 'Irish are anti-British', despite the same measure being actioned by all other neutral countries (*Evening Dispatch*, 03/10/1943, LHMA[71]. The question was soon settled, after pragmatic considerations superseded those of pride, and civilian clothes were provided for British Forces personnel on departure to Eire. Sir John Maffey, British Representative in Eire, reported to Lord Cranborne that de Valera was ignoring recruitment in Eire, but insisted those Irish in the British Forces should not come home in uniform. Maffey added that Britain should be mindful not to upset this situation. However, he could not let this agreement alter his view of de Valera's irksome fastidiousness by adding 'It is again one of

[71] See also 'Soldiers who Infringe America's Neutrality' where Canadian soldiers were warned not to go near the American border in Uniform or they might face internment (*Western Daily Press,* 17/07/1940).

those unreasoning prejudices to which attention must be paid…' (*TNA, PREM 1/340*). Maffey did not appreciate the paradox of his own situation in accepting Irish neutrality while deriding it as unbending and irksome.

Irish neutrality added a level of paradox into conceptions of the Irish military tradition as well as the ancient stereotype of the Irish as a martial race. Notwithstanding all the above, there was some evidence that British people recognised the historical contribution of Irish people in the British Forces. A Liverpool newspaper, like many others, acknowledged the breadth and depth of the Irish contribution, and reported that 'Leaving aside the Anglo-Irish…a number of the Irish-Irish are in England's fighting services…they are in all the services … (*Liverpool Daily Post*, 18/11/1940, p.2). *The Guardian* similarly noted 'Irish neutrality is neutrality with a difference. There are 150,000 Irishmen in the British Forces…and a quarter of a million Irish workers in Britain's war factories' (*The Guardian*, 11/08/1942, LHMA). There was also pride in the Irish roots of many of the leaders of the British Armed Forces. Postal Censorship in Northern Ireland captured, in a letter from Belfast to London, pride in the Irish Generals, asserting 'what and where would your country be without them, lost as it would have been in the past without their predecessors' (8/12/42, *TNA, CJ 4/30*). The interesting use of 'your' rather than 'our' country might imply that the writer assumes that the reader may not know that these heroes were Irish. Similarly, a *Belfast Newsletter* editorial confirms pride in 'Ulster's Generals' Montgomery and Alexander 'as both men belong to old and distinguished Ulster families' and concludes that 'in nothing, perhaps, do the Ulster people themselves find keener satisfaction than in having provided the British Army with its most famous leaders' (*Belfast Newsletter*, 14/09/1945, p.4). That these heroes were solely referred to as British generals in the British press, and regarded themselves as British, seems to confirm that these were considered Irish in Ireland, but British in Britain, and the act of joining the British Forces seemed to confer Britishness upon Irish volunteers.

It should also be noted that newspapers do not evidence significant prejudice against Irish troops in British Forces, or express that these might have harboured IRA sympathies. Only one mention of this possibility has emerged in this study, that of MO Diarist 5406, who in November

1939 related an overheard story of two Tank Corps men on a bus saying that in a friend's regiment two IRA men had joined up and one was caught in the act of trying to set fire to a petrol dump (5/11/39, *MO Diarist 5406*). This lack of evidence of a suspected fifth column activity in the British Forces tends to bolster the contention that British opinion was content to believe that Irish people in the British Forces adhered to British conceptions of the war. Occasional stories of Irish in the British forces in receipt of public charity also tended to bolster this view, with one recipient officer, formerly of the Free State Army, graciously asserting 'Your kind act serves to cement the friendship and loyalty of every Irishman in the British forces to the common cause' (*Hull Daily Mail,* 03/08/1940, p.13).

6.4 The 'Fighting Irish'

The paradox of Irish volunteers in the British Forces was most notable in November 1940, when Churchill criticised the Irish refusal of the Treaty Ports in the House of Commons on the same day that Irishman Capt. Fogarty Fegen was posthumously awarded the VC for ramming the Admiral Scheer to protect the rest of a 38-ship convoy (R Fisk, 1985, p. 252). Captain Fegen was of a Catholic Irish family steeped in naval tradition, his father rising to the rank of Vice Admiral, and represented a longstanding and vital tradition of Irish soldiery in the British Services[72]. This tradition continued after independence and in 1936 the Army still 'could ill afford to lose (Southern Irish) recruits', and proposed provision should be made to allow Irish nationals to serve in the British forces whilst retaining their Irish nationality (*TNA, CAB 53/28*). This helped create a useful stereotype, that of the 'fighting Irish'; Irish soldiers in foreign armies noted for their bravery, fortitude, and sacrifice[73]. A letter to the editor of the *Daily Herald* exhibits a number of tropes associated with this stereotype; that the great Irish Regiments still contain 'some of the most daring fighters in the Army', these men follow the tradition of their fathers, are led by some

[72] In 1780 1/3rd of British Officers were Irish (Bartlett & Jeffery, 1996, p. 7) and in 1830 over 40% of the army was Irish-born or the sons of emigrants (Spiers, 1996, p. 337).

[73] As Bartlett and Jeffery note, this was one of few stereotypes shared by the British and all shades of Irish Nationalists (Bartlett & Jeffery, 1996, p. 7). 'A Sorrowful Clare woman', offering condolences on the death of Brendan 'Paddy' Finucane in 1942 wrote, 'No wonder England is sore about Eire's army. Sons of the Gael do not run away from danger but court it' (Finucane, 1943).

of the greatest military commanders and are proof that 'not all Irishmen are bomb-throwing fanatics' (*Daily Herald,* 03/02/1040, p.6). British newspaper views of the fighting Irish in World War Two often lauded their contribution without reference to neutrality. Reports noted the contribution of both North and South in British regiments (*Newcastle Journal & Mail*, 20/07/1940, p.4), while others espoused their work ethic and positive attitude, noting 'The Faughs have a wonderful war record dating back to the eighteenth century. They are ready for anything…' (*Belfast Newsletter*, 06/03/1940, p.9). The *Daily Mail* encouraged the Irish to 'Forget Yesterday', and that many 'have served in the Army of Eire and now they are prepared to fight in the forces of a nation against whom their country waged such a bitter struggle so short a time ago. But that is the way of the Irish. Through the centuries they have pledged themselves to freedom....' (*Daily Mail*, 26/10/1939, p.12). This attitude was also heard in the cabinet with the Secretary of state for the Home Department (Sir John Anderson) voicing, shortly before his replacement, that 'Irish people were resolute fighters and he thought that they would be capable of dealing with parachutists or airborne invasion' (*TNA, CAB 66/7/68*).

However, the idea of the 'Fighting Irish' was something which could become dangerously close to being fetishized, a heroic image of daring and courage unrelated to the ordinary men and women who joined up. A copy of a book review by John Pierce of a memoir of Brendan Finucane in the fallen flyers personal papers rails against the books tendency to project Finucane as an 'emblem' or 'personified shamrock', 'making his mind a mystic madhouse of Greek and Gaelic heroics' (Finucane, 1943). A comrade of Finucane's wrote to his parents that 'The book is manifestly a fanciful effort to represent Paddy to the general public as the type of character (that) will appeal to the vast field of Irish lovers & hero worshippers' (Letter W.D. Perl, Finucane, 1943, IWM). Both reviewers were at pains to depict Finucane as an ordinary young man of duty and talent looking forward to 'a job with figures, auditing or accounting, who insisted that 'pilots are perfectly normal people' (Review, Pierce, Finucane, 1943, IWM). The comments show an obvious disdain for the book and its writer, who professed to have known Brendan in Ireland, but was unknown to Finucane's family, as well as disdain for the world of 'Gaelic heroes' and tales

of myth and fancy that were written about them. They preferred to see Brendan as a brave man, an Irish volunteer and '*not* a dreamer' (Review, Pierce, Finucane, 1943, IWM), something that had been for centuries an Irish stereotype rather than an English one. Indeed, some British felt the Irish volunteers naive to contribute to the war uncompelled. Describing training at Caterham Camp shortly after Dunkirk, H. Broderick Pitland wrote 'I and another Dubliner, Patrick Mooney, are the only two volunteers in our hut out of 22 conscripts. We…are looked upon as bloody daft by the conscripts' (Pitland, 1940). Volunteering would be part of the stereotype where the Irish are always 'up for a fight', however, in general early attitudes to Irish troops were positive and unqualified, stressing the martial tradition of the Irish throughout the centuries. A writer to *The Times*, exemplified this attitude by quoting Napoleon, who reportedly said 'Give me English soldiers, Irish officers, and French Generals, and I will conquer the world' (*The Times*, 18/10/1939, p.9).

Such faith in Irish competency was rare after the fall of France, and the paradox of Irish men in the British Forces while their country remained neutral, appears more strongly in public discourse. British contemporary attitudes signal that the paradox could only be explained by Irish volunteers repudiating state neutrality. *The Liverpool Daily Press* opined that 'The Irish do not take kindly to neutrality even, or especially, in a private fight…' (*Liverpool Daily Post*, 18/11/1940, p.2), inferring that those who take up arms are truly 'Irish'. Readers' letters often concurred, with one writer asserting 'there are no *real* Irishmen afraid of all the Germans between here and hell. We will win this war without the Eire ports but the help of thousands of patriotic Irishmen' (*Newcastle Journal & Mail,* 23/11/1940, p.4). Contemporary news also features Irish emigrant groups and associations in Britain, and all over the world, carrying resolutions against Irish neutrality, and these often cite the tradition of the fighting Irish to show common cause with the Allies. A meeting in London organised by a former deputy-lieutenant for County Cork moved that Irish men and women living under the hospitality of Great Britain did not approve of their country's neutrality, and that 'Irishmen, as they did in the last war are taking a major part in the defence of the empire' (*Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail*, 21/02/1941, p.6). A similar report of

this kind relates ‘Former members of the IRA are joining the Irish Regiment which has been established on the Witwatersrand, South Africa. Their attitude is that the issues facing the Union of South Africa and the British Empire are of such importance that it is their duty to sink past differences and throw in their lot with their fellow Irishmen’ (*Hull Daily Mail*, 08/01/1940, p.4). Such stories contributed to a discourse in which those Irish who have emigrated were considered less insular than their parochial countrymen at home, hiding behind neutrality from the realities of the world, further enhancing the supposed disconnect between people and government.

However, some British opinion saw neutrality as part of a natural progression for Irish nationalists and this brought about fierce criticism. A writer signing himself ‘A Scot and Glad of it’ replies to a previous letter lauding the Irish volunteers from ‘Irish and Proud of it’. The Scot writes that the Irish writer tells only half the story and asks ‘is he proud of Ireland's association with Germany in 1916.... Can he really take pride in the gallantry of Irishmen who support Britain without condemning the policy of Mr de Valera?’ (*The Scotsman*, 07/12/1940, p.9). Here de Valera’s policy is seen as an extension of the nationalist tradition that believed ‘England’s difficulty is Ireland’s opportunity’ and makes clear that the writer considers Irish soldiers should confront their leaders and share the risks of being part of a combatant nation. The issue of neutrality was becoming a rigidly divisive tool with the Irish being either for or against, distinguished from each other by the act of volunteering in the Allied Armies. A letter in the *Daily Mirror* written by an ‘Irish ex-soldier’ asserts ‘Don't worry chums. When the thousands of our men who are now fighting the German's get back to Ireland… (we will) remind de Valera that not for him did I lose a leg at Dunkirk in 1940’. The paper answers ‘Goody, Goody! Keep it in mind. We'll be relying on you!’ (*Daily Mirror*, 24/11/1944, p.6)[74].

Emergency legislation in Ireland, and particularly that covering censorship, contributed to a conception in Britain that the Irish were ashamed of their countrymen’s contribution. A Belfast paper noted 'Today ministers in Dublin seem to be ashamed of the men from Eire who

[74] This letter is titled ‘Eire! Eire!’ meant to rhyme with ‘Hear! Hear!’ proving the copy writer does not know how to pronounce the name of this troublesome country.

have enlisted in the British Fighting services. Public mention of them is prohibited....' (*Belfast Newsletter*, 15/07/1944, p.2), and *The Guardian* noted 'There is little about Fogarty Fegen or about Paddy Finucane in the Irish newspapers, but there is any amount of talk about them in Irish pubs.....' (The Guardian, 11/08/1942, LHMA). Pamela Hinkson wrote to the editor of *The Times* that Irish soldiers were volunteering in large numbers, both Catholic and Protestant, 'with double generosity' as they were doing so without the promise of preferential post war treatment in their own country (*The Times,* 21/07/1943, p.5), foreshadowing the controversy in Britain over Post-war treatment of these volunteers. Newspaper reports also made it common knowledge that Irish Forces personnel were deserting to join the British Forces, reporting the denial by the Eire government of estimates that 12,000 soldiers had deserted the Eire Army for the British (*Belfast Telegraph*, 16/12/1943, p.3). Belfast Newspapers reveal that Southern Irish volunteers often crossed the border illegally, however this was often overlooked by the courts who discharged them to the care of recruiting officers (*Belfast Newsletter*, 10/06/1942, p.2; *Belfast Telegraph,* 30/03/1942, p.3). Such action was in stark contrast to that taken against Eire citizens not intending to volunteer, who were often ejected. Similar reports in Britain showed that men who had deserted the Irish Forces to join the British were arrested and imprisoned whilst visiting Ireland, and, on returning to their units in Britain, were charged with desertion from the British Army, though they were often acquitted and returned to their British units (*Daily Herald*, 10/10/1944, p.3). Reports from Britain showed a tendency for some Irish soldiers before the courts to be treated quite leniently, even if they had deserted (*Western Daily Press*, 28/06/1943, p.2). There is further evidence that the public knew of the risk the Irish government avoided by downplaying the role of Irish volunteers, with HI reporting a rumour that Lord Haw-Haw had 'warned Eire that the bombing of Dublin, will be repeated if men from the south of Ireland continue to join the British Forces' (18/7/1941, *TNA, INF 1/292*). Whilst a large proportion of the British public had direct knowledge of the effects of bombing, and doubtless understood the Irish desire to avoid these, many believed that the risk should be taken and that shirking it was dishonourable.

6.5 AN IRISH BRIGADE

The traditions of the 'Fighting Irish' prompted opinion that the time was right to create an Irish Brigade to give these recruits regimental pride and, to some extent, recreate some of the Irish regiments disbanded at Irish independence. As Early as October 1939 representations had been made to government by, among others, Lt General Sir Hubert Gough, retired Anglo-Irish veteran, whose campaign to have the contribution of the Irish volunteers recognised, did not cease until long after the war had ended. His long correspondence in *The Times'* received support in many quarters, but his proposals were initially ignored by the Army and Government. Lord Craigavon notably dismissed a petition for an Irish brigade as 'not a thing to be taken seriously' and noted 'I am sorry to say the Sir Hubert Gough has gone off a good deal…but I am not going to say one word against him because there is no doubt, he was at one time a very gallant soldier' (*Birmingham Post*, 30/10/1940, p.2). However, in July 1940 the War Cabinet considered the possibility of sending the London Irish battalions to Eire if that would help break the diplomatic deadlock over the Treaty ports. Considerations mitigating against such a move included a problem which would remain unsolved, that is the 'Irish battalions' were not predominantly Irish. At the time, the London Irish first battalion comprised only 28% Irishmen and the second only 23%, with only 15% and 9% respectively from Eire. Eden's memorandum to the War Cabinet on this issue concluded that it would be necessary to take hundreds of Irish men from many different units, upsetting the valuable cohesion of existing units, and forming a new unit based on nationality rather than skills amounted to a waste of valuable human resources. For Eden this was a doubly unnecessary disruption when 'there seems no strong reason to suppose that they would prove more acceptable to Mr de Valera than other British units' (*TNA, CAB 66/9/48*). Indeed, de Valera had given no encouragement to such an idea, and it would be British Army presence rather than Irish soldiers that would create animosity.

However, the prospect of an Irish Brigade in the British Army remained a popular theme. In February 1941, while agreeing Eire was entitled to her neutrality, a *Sunday Express* editorial

suggested ‘Let us revive those famous regiments which have been so much a part of the glorious history of Ireland…so that future generations…shall be able to say…the great the fighting regiments of Ireland were in the forefront of the battle, as always’ (*Sunday Express*, 16/02/1941, p.6). But it was a letter from Gough in *The Times* that spurred Churchill to raise the issue once more in cabinet in October 1941, saying ‘there were indications that public opinion in Ireland would be gratified’ by some recognition of the Irish volunteers contribution, and asked the new Secretary for War, David Margesson, to consider the possibility of creating an Irish Brigade (*TNA, CAB 65/19/37*). Interestingly Gough’s original letter did not express the opinion that the Irish would welcome such a move, rather that such a move could set in motion a ‘spirit of reconciliation’ in which to move forward in Anglo-Irish relations. The letter also asserts that Irish volunteers ‘represented valuable evidence that Irish neutrality is not a mask for a hostile spirit towards Britain’, and that an Irish Brigade would pose no infringement of neutrality, just as the Eagle Squadron in the RAF did not infringe American neutrality (*The Times*, 26/09/1941, p.5). Churchill’s response, that ‘we have Free French and Vichy French, so why not Loyal Irish and Dublin Irish?’ (*TNA, PREM 3/127/5*) betrays his opinion that Irish volunteers who joined the British forces did so for kinship with Britain. Gough’s campaign stimulated a lively debate, in several letter’s columns, and most letters seized upon Gough’s claims that Irish neutrality was not ‘anti-British’, rather than considering his main theme, that Irish volunteers were making a significant contribution and that this ought to be recognised. Certainly, Churchill agreed, and was instrumental in creating, in 1942, the 38th Irish Brigade. However, Northern Irish opinion doubtless influenced how the battalion was eventually formed, and because of this the 38th was not constituted in the way Churchill conceived it.

The *Belfast Telegraph*, on the same day as Gough’s Times letter was published, disputes his claim that an Irish Brigade could bring about reconciliation, arguing ‘no 'Irish', or 'Free Irish', Brigade can ever erase the fact that when civilisation itself was at stake Eire deliberately chose the way of 'Ourselves alone'’ (*Belfast Telegraph*, 26/09/1941, p.4). This unflinching opinion was echoed in December by Andrews, NI Prime Minister in a letter to the UK Prime Minister.

Reminding Churchill, as if it was needed, that after the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921 the only remaining Irish Army Battalions were territorially 'Ulster regiments, and are considered so by our people', Andrews warned that the ideas of Gough were 'not acceptable to the people of Ulster'. They would also object to the name 'Irish Brigade' as it was associated with Irish who fought against England in the Boer war, Sir Roger Casement's attempt in World War One, and a Blueshirt contingent in the Spanish Civil War (*TNA, PREM 3/129/5*). Northern Irish opinion was so vehemently against any recognition of Southern Irish contribution that, when the Brigade was formed in 1942, no special units of Southern Irish were formed, and was composed from a mix of existing Ulster battalions, territorial and home defence formations, and the London Irish Rifles. Northern Irish opinion seemed to be typified by replies in the *Belfast Newsletter* deriding Sir Shane Leslie's [75] opinion that the Irish contribution had mitigated against invasion. LRH of Magherafelt wrote it was 'specious…to suggest that Germany has been kept out of Ireland by...the fact that thousands of Irish volunteers have been allowed to swell the common defence' and that Leslie's statement made 'no real contribution' to the solution of the problem of the Defence of Eire (*Belfast Newsletter*, 27/11/1944, p.4). Newspaper correspondence in the North betrayed the general opinion that nothing from Eire, bar joining the war on the British side, would be interpreted as positive news. It was up to First World War Irish veteran Captain Henry Harrison to speak on behalf of the Eire volunteers, agreeing with Gough that their actions prove 'that Ireland's chosen policy of Neutrality carries with it no element of hostility towards this country', and that, though Irish regiments 'may or may not be possible in this war', 'every Irish volunteer will be gratified if…there should be an official recognition of their service and nationality on traditional military lines' (*The Times*, 14/10/1941, p.5). Ultimately, the closest the Irish volunteers came to this kind or recognition was Churchill's victory speech in May 1945, which served to bolster the British belief that neutrality was not supported by the Irish people.

[75] A first cousin of Winston Churchill and previously a Home Ruler.

6.6 A Fifth Column?

Fears of 'fifth column' activity within the British Forces, especially when reported in letters to newspapers and editorials, usually referred to expected activity by the IRA. Early in the war, and during the 1938-39 IRA 'S-plan' attacks, comment typically restated the Irish Nationalist mantra that 'England's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity to strike for freedom', citing the 1916 rising and Casements attempts to form a German aligned 'Irish Brigade', as evidence of expected Irish perfidy. Public fears of Irish Fifth Column activities within the British Forces were minimal, but military intelligence actively searched for evidence to the contrary. Reports on the Censorship of Prisoners of war mail indicate that censors felt it necessary to search for signs of preferential treatment of Irish prisoners in German hands, and noted, on several occasions that 'the German censor is marking all Irish mail with a Red Cross or red underlining's' (*TNA, DEFE 1/335*, report 3/4/41). Though this was suspicious, later mails indicated that this was due mostly to the Germans being just as suspect of the Irish mails as the British (*TNA, DEFE 1/335*, report 13/10/41), and that German censors required a special mark for letters that may need Gaelic translation (*TNA, DEFE 1/335*, report 26/7/41).

Though marked mail often contained little of interest to the censors[76], there were hints alerting censors to the possibility of attempts to form a German 'Irish Brigade', and indeed, at least one British POW also expected as much writing 'Some of the Irish are going back to our headquarters. I suppose they are trying to turn them against us again' (21/6/1941, *TNA, DEFE 1/335*). Censored letters to Dublin revealed German attempts, based on an expected Irish anti-communist and anti-English bias, at holding interviews designed to find those with an Irish identity in order to send them to a special camp (3/4/1941, *TNA, DEFE 1/335*). Other reports showed bribes of beer and cigarettes offered (29/2/1941, *TNA, DEFE 1/335*), the use of propaganda films (3/10/1941, *TNA, DEFE 1/335*), and offers of possible repatriation to Ireland

[76]Report No: 30 03/4/1941 in TNA, DEFE 1/335, reports one such letter, not addressed to Ireland, 'merely contained a reference to the addressee possessing a "big Irish heart".

(25/3/1941 & 13/10/1941, *TNA, DEFE 1/335*), to purportedly win over Irish soldiers to the Nazi cause. Worryingly for British Intelligence there was some evidence that Irish soldiers were responding to such overtures, with letters asserting the Germans were not so anti-religious as had been thought, reports of messages being sent to POWs families from friendly guards, of Irish soldiers learning German, and numerous reports that conditions in the 'Irish Camp', Stalag IIIA, were better than at British camp (*TNA, DEFE 1/335*, report 29/4/41). Some attempts to co-opt Irish soldiers in British uniform were more direct. During summer and autumn 1940 censorship of POW mail revealed attempts to form a German Irish Brigade, but the plan was shelved at the time of Operation Barbarossa (O'Halpin, 2003, pp. 56-57). Censors reports in 1941 note two men writing home that 'all the Irish were assembled and asked individually which country they would fight for if Ireland and England went to war', and that only ten replied they would fight for Ireland (*TNA, DEFE 1/335*, report 24/5/41). It might have been tempting to believe that this failed because most Irish personnel were more loyal to Britain than their home country, rather than the more likely prospect that they were showing solidarity against the enemy alongside their predominantly British colleagues. The second letter, in the same report, mentioning this incident, shows the writer knows there are 'Irishmen on the Wireless broadcasting from here' but adds 'if you are waiting on me you are wasting your time' (*TNA, DEFE 1/335*, report 3/5/41), indicating that the writer considers he would never betray his comrades in the face of crude propaganda attempts to divide and conquer.

Despite such attempts confidential security reports repeatedly state that there was little evidence of preferential treatment for Irish prisoners, and further that the mail examined produced little evidence of German activities among the Irish prisoners (*TNA, DEFE 1/335*). The letters intercepted indicated that most Irish prisoners of war writing home had good morale and were well treated. This was particularly apparent in letters from the 'Irish camp' where, as one soldier put it, 'there are other Irish boys here too, so we often talk of home...' (*TNA, DEFE 1/335*, report 13/10/41), displaying that the purpose of separating the Irish had the opposite effect to that intended, creating unity rather than division. Letters from the Irish camp reveal better conditions,

with sport, cinema and German lessons provided and less work expected, though some felt this put them in a 'queer position' against their comrades who were not so lucky. However, some men appreciated the camp, but realised 'it was only for men with a particular point of view', this division was noted by one soldier who wrote 'fourteen of us could not see eye to eye with the remainder' and were returned to their previous camps, 'I feel easier in mind now that I am back here. The views of allegiance I took eight years ago will not be changed by anything' (*TNA, DEFE 1/335*, report 21/3/41). In general, censors concluded the Irish experience in German camps was like that of their British colleagues, and their nationality or political sensibilities proved no significant threat to security. As one Northern Irish combatant wrote home 'The past year has been a wonderful experience, so full of varied interest and experience, excitement and boredom, chivalry and brutality, cheerfulness and depression. How adaptable the British soldier is, nothing can quench his spirit, he's top dog even here' (*TNA, DEFE 1/335*, report 3/6/1941), and it is likely that most of his compatriots felt the same and acted accordingly. Though the 1941 'Irish Camp' experiment failed, there were further intelligence reports of attempts to turn the allegiance of Irish Prisoners[77], and a final attempt by Heinrich Himmler in July 1944. This SS plan was essentially to create a brigade based on the existing Free Corps/Legion of St George for propaganda purposes rather than as a reservoir of military manpower. As Mark Hull notes these 'Irish were sent to a special camp at Buchenwald but proved impervious 'against every influence' (Hull, 2004, p. 207). Later it transpired that 7 Irish Privates out of 1,200 Irish POW prisoners of war, in the British Army, volunteered (Hull, 2004, p. 219). Official fears of disloyalty from Irish soldiers were proved exaggerated and appeared to be motivated almost solely by historical associations to Casements failed Irish Brigade rather than evidence of any real threat.

[77] '14 October 1942 a telegram has been received from the military attaché at Berne to the effect that a man called Hewson, a PoW captured in Crete, had turned up. After a rough time as a PoW he had been approached owing to his Irish parentage with a suggestion that he should work for the Germans' (West, 2005a, p. 14)).

6.7 BELLIGERENT INTERNEES

As a neutral power Eire was bound by international convention to intern belligerents found within their jurisdiction, though how this was to be done was by no means clear. Acceptance of internment, by British public opinion or government, was by no means easy because, as Bernard Kelly argues, of confusion over its purpose. Interned fliers were not prisoners of war but were required to stay in camps and to cease belligerent activities as if they were. For the Irish, the 'sole reason Dublin detained combatant personnel was to fulfil Ireland's international duty as a neutral country. Failure to intern, or displaying excessive favouritism to one over the other, would lead to questions over the validity of neutrality' (Kelly, 2015, p. 56). In the febrile atmosphere of contemporary Anglo-Irish relations, this confusion did not preclude controversy or politicization of the internee's situation.

The problem of aircraft straying over Irish territory was confirmed on the day war was declared when two British seaplanes made a forced landings at Skerries and Dún Laoghaire harbour, due to poor weather, but were left to depart in better conditions. On 14 September 1939 a British flying boat made a forced landing in Ventry Harbour, Kerry and this was brought to the attention of de Valera during a meeting with Sir John Maffey (R Fisk, 1985, p. 108)[78]. Such evidence suggests that the Irish government considered this to be one of the areas where 'special consideration' was to be granted to Britain, not least because it was feasible that Allied aircraft were on non-operational flights, whereas Axis aircraft were much more likely to be on active missions in Eire skies. Indeed, deliberate lenience on this issue is implied by a threat to use interment against Allied flyers if the British government did not clamp down on speculative newspaper stories of Irish aid to the Nazi's (Kelly, 2015, p. 31; *NAI, DFA Legal Adviser's Papers No: 55*, 20/10/1939). However, as the numbers of downed fliers and landed sailors increased, and with German internees outstripping the British by five to one[79], a more neutral policy was required. As a result, during 1941 and 1942, Allied personnel found in Eire were interned in a

[78] The aircraft left with its crew after a local mechanic fixed an engine fault.
[79] Between 1940 and 1945 Allied internees numbered 45 and Axis 269 (Kelly, 2015, p. 2)

special camp, separated from Axis and IRA internees, at the Curragh. Never treated as prisoners of war and referred to as 'guests of the State', the internees lived under a regime, based almost solely on their word of honour, that they abide by a night-time curfew and could otherwise leave the camp on parole.

However, the issue of internees in Eire elicited little public comment in Britain. Though the escapes of internees were widely reported these stories were rarely more than a few words with no added commentary. Reports on the first internee mentioned his forced landing due to fuel shortage, but also noted that he 'had been generously treated' and was reading as much as he could to continue his interrupted University Studies (*Lancashire Daily Post*, 11/12/1940, p. 4). In this research no evidence of public disquiet was found concerning Allied internees, but some is noted, in Northern Ireland, of 'speculation' over Axis internees (21/8/1940, *TNA, INF 1/292*) and the possibility of these escaping and contacting either the IRA or the German legation (13/1/1944, *TNA, INF 1/292*). Newspapers outside of Northern Ireland very rarely referenced British internments in Ireland, but there are a few references to the paradox of the Irish interning Allied flyers who were protecting the convoys that also supplied Ireland with food (Forfar Dispatch, 11/11/1943, p.4; *The Scotsman*, 19/03/1941a, p.9). However, attitudes in the British Intelligence community and government betray, at least, annoyance at the few internments that did occur. In 1940 a new intelligence section, MI9, was set up to aid prisoners of war escape, and these also attempted to aid Allied internees in Eire in their duty to return to service. These were assisted by a network of supporters and safe houses· in Co. Kildare and Dublin, generally among Anglo-Irish loyalists and ex-servicemen (McMahon, 2008, p. 333). The MI9 network was discovered and watched by G2, and their activities officially protested. But the intelligence services, and notably Guy Liddell, usually on good terms with their Irish counterparts, stood fast on their commitment to their internees. In his diary Liddell noted he and his brother Cecil agreed that attempts to free the Allied Eire internees should be 'a rudeness which they must expect' (31/10/1942, West, 2005a, p. 22). But even so the need to be diplomatic in the face of Irish 'intransigence' meant

attempts to free the internees had to be discouraged [80], and, on at least one occasion, those internees who escaped to Northern Ireland were returned to the Curragh[81]. The issue was still an irritation in April 1944 when Cranborne requested, as a personal favour, the release of the remaining Allied internees as they were 'a constant obstacle in the way of his desire to act in a friendly fashion towards us' and caused 'difficulties in the cabinet' (*NAI, DFA Secretary's Files A2*, 03/04/1944). The lack of internment of Allied belligerents at the beginning of the war, followed by a period of internments, and then release of these under the 'non-operational flights' compromise indicate a reactive policy affected by the fortunes of the Allies, and it would be easy to assume that Ireland only interned Allied belligerents when it appeared that the Germans had the upper hand, and released them when the tide of the war had turned, and draw conclusions that the Irish were playing both sides. However, as Bernard Kelly points out this was not exceptional as 'all European neutrals, excluding Switzerland, adjusted their internment regimes as the course of the war dictated' (Kelly, 2015, p. 40). Sweden operated its policy along lines opposite to Eire, returning more German internees than Allied, and initiated the wholesale release of Allied internees in 1944. The Irish regime, however, never allowed the release of Axis internees despite written protests from the German Minister Hempel at the release of Allied servicemen (Kelly, 2015, p. 41). The lack of public protest at Eire's internment of Allied personnel in Eire reflects both the advantages the Irish internment regime offered, and the small number of personnel involved.

[80] LHMA Papers of Baron Mayhew, brother of the first British internee FO Paul Mayhew, reveal his attempts, from within British Intelligence, to aid his brothers escape, were thwarted by senior officers unwillingness to upset understanding with their Irish counterparts (Mayhew, 1940). Paul Mayhew escaped in 1941, his marriage being widely reported, though his wife was sworn to secrecy over how he was free (*Derby Evening Telegraph*, 08/07/1941). Paul Mayhew died on active service in February 1942.

[81] Roland 'Bud' Wolfe, the only American held in Eire, initially served in the RAF Eagle Squadron, and twice escaped from the Curragh. In 1941 he was returned by senior officers, at the suggestion of Maffey and Gray (Kelly, 2015, p. 93), who were keen that the regime in the Curragh should not be tightened. He escaped again in 1943 and joined the USAF, from where his return was not requested. His first escape meant the end of MI9 policy of aiding escapes from Eire and subsequent attempts were organised solely from inside the wire.

6.8 EXPERIENCES OF THE IRISH IN THE BRITISH FORCES

Postal censorship of letters from Irish people in the forces asserted that they were rarely singled out for special treatment, and, in general, felt well served by the British Army. There is some evidence that the British Forces were, on occasion, reactive to the special circumstances of Irish volunteers, a good example being the rescinding of a regulation preventing men adding two days short leave to their weeks privilege leave if their leave involved a sea passage, after 'Irish personnel…(saw) in this an example of discrimination against them' (31/5/1942, *TNA, WO 163/51*). Stephen O'Connor's research on Irish combatants in World War Two and concluded that most felt their identity was regarded as something to be embraced by the British Forces (O'Connor, 2015). In contemporary evidence, though some general references to anti-Irish feeling do occur[82], troops mail censorship tend to evidence this conclusion, where reports note that there was 'uniformly high morale…and no special tendencies to due to racial feeling were observed' against Irish troops (13/4/1944, *TNA, WO 204/714*). Many Irishmen felt pride in serving and their letters showed it; 'The general tone is excellent. Most writers are proud of being Irish *and* of serving in the British Army. Reference is often made to the large number of Southern Irish in H.M. Forces' (30/4/1944, *TNA, WO 204/714*). The lack of prejudice against Irish soldiers reflects a positive advantage for Irish soldiers, who were assumed to be acting out of loyalty to Britain and her war aims, even when this may not have been their primary concern. Recent research has argued a large proportion of those who joined the British Forces from Eire were initially Irish Forces reservists, who felt unable to make a career in the Irish Army, while some were affected by domestic economic pressure because of poor pay at home[83], others by apathy at being trained to fight, yet having no guns, and being limited to the performance of boring public works, such as hated Turf cutting. Others had traditional family association with the British Forces, or could

[82] After witnessing anti-Semitism Mary Morris notes 'I wonder if there will ever come a time when people are accepted as they are regardless of race, colour or culture. My Irish accent is still looked upon with suspicion by some people!' (18/9/1944, Morris, 1945).

[83] The average Private First Class of the Irish Forces was left with 13 shillings pay, after expenses deducted, per week. In the British Army the equivalent was 22 shillings a week (Quinn, 2020, p.13-14)

not stand poor conditions, with some even citing the 'unsoldierly' Irish Army Uniform (Quinn, 2020, p. 12-17). However, contemporary evidence shows the Irish in the British Forces were fighting for Ireland rather than Britain, for if Britain fell Ireland would be exposed to further threat.

However, many Irish remarked on the one official policy which effectively discriminated against Irish people in the forces; that is the travel ban to Ireland instituted during the preparations for D-Day. The censors' reports indicate that, though this was regretted, most Irish in the forces agreed that such as step was necessary, with one Irish soldier writing 'I'm convinced that poor old Eire had to be become isolated, but I'm sure all sensible Irish people will realise it was essential'. Others felt it was now time for Ireland to reconsider her neutrality, on the grounds that choosing sides would be to her advantage now that invasion was no longer likely. One letter weighed up the advantages and disadvantages stating 'The boys feel pretty sore about it... (Eire) needn't send any troops or indeed commit herself in any way - she' not likely to be bombed as a reprisal nowadays. All she need do is stop Jerry using wireless sets and diplomatic channels to give away secrets' (16/4/1944, *TNA, WO 204/10381*). There were a few dissident voices, however, who insisted Eire was within her rights, but the travel ban was questionable while '400,00 Irishmen volunteered…. and to apply sanctions to a neutral country acting within its rights, seems rather a poor gesture of a United Front against Nazism. Why was not sanctions applied to Spain…?' (16/4/1944, *TNA, WO 204/10381*). Another reports noted several writers took the action as an 'insult to fighting Irishmen' who had all volunteered to fight for England (13/4/1944, *TNA, WO 204/714*). The travel ban showed Irish personnel were most worried about the welfare of their families and the possibility of it delaying their mail, but 'Despite this there has been nothing in the nature of protest nor any criticism of wisdom of the measures adopted by the British government for the maintenance of security' (30/4/1944, *TNA, WO 204/10381*).

Despite the few who questioned why Ireland was being treated differently from other neutrals, Irish soldiers appeared, by this time, to be more accepting of British views on how the war should be fought, and direct exposure to events outside Ireland, and of course to the realities

of the frontline, made them more sympathetic to policies which would finish the war expediently. Wendy Webster emphasises the effect of dual identities and common journeys of those Irish people in the British forces – many would grow to identify more strongly with their compatriots than with the sensibilities of those civilians at home (Webster, 2018, pp. 70-71). Censors' reports also highlight that some Irish soldiers now appeared to react with disgust at the position of Eire, some hoping that the American Forces would take the treaty ports, and others the entire country, noting this 'would be better for all concerned'. Others wrote home saying they saw no future for themselves in Ireland after the war (30/4/1944, *TNA, WO 204/714*). It appeared that the influence of British attitudes on those Irish people serving in the forces did affect their attitudes to their own country. But undoubtedly dual loyalties persisted, and it would have been interesting to see if these attitudes changed if Ireland had been later under threat of invasion.

6.9 BRITISH ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE IRISH IN THE FORCES

Censorship of troop's mail, despite the sheer numbers of Irish volunteers in the British Forces, sometimes indicated that British soldiers simply did not understand Irish Nationalism or that Eire was an independent Dominion, reflecting the opinions of those who completed the MO 1939 Race Survey. They also, like the general British population, blamed the Irish government for leading the Irish people astray, but showed them no sympathy for their supposed plight. Several British troops saw de Valera's policy as 'surprising' and a few thought him 'a stupid nitwit who thought Eire could survive…without the help of England' (13/04/1944, *TNA, WO 204/714*). Some continued to feel that Ireland was a natural part of Britain, unable to survive independently, and destined to return to the Empire, as the temerity of neutrality had proved Irish independence untenable. A forces chaplain wrote in his diary that whether 'Mr de Valera likes it or not the British Isles are a single unit, economically…and above all as we see clearly now strategically. Ireland is an essential part of a whole greater than himself…', and after the war

Ireland must 'accept her inevitably (sic) destiny, (or) this time we lapse instead into civil War'[84] (Quinn, 1943, IWM). Others lamented the position of ignominy to which they saw Ireland had descended, with one letter noting 'Poor old Eire is a black dot on the map of the world now...' (13/04/1944, *TNA, WO 204/714*). However, Diarist Mary Morris, serving in Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps, summed up the general feeling of the British Services towards Irish volunteers when she wrote 'there is remarkably little resentment or even comment on Ireland's neutrality in this war. There were of course those dark mutterings from Churchill in the early days…(but) there are so many Irishmen in the British Services that most people have forgotten that they are volunteers, and this is not their fight' (Morris, 1945/3/45, IWM). In general, Irish participants were more likely to be singled out as different from their peers when wartime events gave emphasis to one of two competing discourses; one that they were a vital addition to depleted military resources and the other where they were anomalies that could effectively be ignored.

Newspaper articles frequently used Irish volunteers as an example of paradoxical Irishness, which allowed for their contribution to be dismissed as unexplainable. One article highlights the popular belief that 'the people of Eire are easy-going courteous and friendly, but they are still very bitter towards the English', but relates a conversation with a man, 'meticulously neutral', who surprisingly turned out to be an RAF pilot on leave at home (*Aberdeen Press & Journal*, 25/04/1944, p.2). Other reports note a similar paradox where at a public meeting on Irish neutrality a London Councillor spoke that 'the English idea of the Irish temper was completely mistaken, Ireland liked peace but was always ready to take a share in a fight if this was forced upon her', and that Eire's attitude was 'I stand for my rights, but I'll give you a hand'. He also succinctly explained the feeling of most Irish nationalists at the time, 'I love English people, but I do not agree the English have a right to govern... (and that) no nation would have war if it could

[84] This remarkable set of notes in Rev Quinn's diary starts 'The grievances of Ireland have always found a sympathetic hearing in England'. It continues to blame British governments for 'indulging' demands made by a people who know 'full well how to exploit that English blend of tendencies and indolence which makes the British Government apt to make concessions for the sake of peace…', and asks 'When will the English realize that the dominant party in Ireland have no good will for them?' (Quinn, 1943). It concludes Ireland should return as part of the UK, despite his characterisation of Anglo-Irish relations being clearly one of an ongoing mutually abusive relationship.

be avoided' (*West London Observer*, 23/06/1944, p.5). This was the paradox that British people did not appear to understand, that the Irish would fight but their nation would stand aside, and the nation would fight, of their own choice, only if this were unavoidable.

There was, after neutrality had weathered its first controversies, plenty of evidence in the public domain to show that Irish people (in Eire) did not feel they should invite bombing upon their unprotected cities, supported de Valera and neutrality, and still shared revulsion of Hitler's domination of Europe. Yet some still could not quite grasp the intricacies of the Irish politics, such as the British Army Sergeant writing to the Western Morning News, initially asserts the Irish volunteers 'love their country, so please give Eire's a break', yet suggesting 'the vast majority of the Irish people want to be with us. The snag is the government…de Valera just won't play' (*Western Morning News*, 01/12/1943, p.4). This opinion, appears to typify most British public opinion of Eire during the War, being based on cultural stereotypes, the paradox of the Irish volunteers, British expedience, a profound ignorance of the realities of Irish Politics, and the dual cultures of Nationalists and Loyalists. The habit of most British soldiers of referring to both Northern and Southern, Nationalist or loyalist, Protestant or Catholic, as either 'Paddy' or 'Mick', reported in many memoirs[85], is interpreted by Bernard Kelly as serving to eradicate the differences between different Irish cultures (Kelly, n.d.., p. 10), but could equally be interpreted as a sign of ignorance of these differences.

Luckily, however, those Irish who volunteered for the British Forces often met more understanding comrades. Mary Morris wrote in her diary 'I am reading Mein Kampf, which always makes Wally snort with anger. She calls me a fifth columnist!' (18/6/1944, Morris, 1945, IWM), betraying that some could see that the actions of a dedicated and courageous nurse outweighed the possibility that she might agree with Hitler's philosophy because of her choice of reading material. Camaraderie in the forces could overcome the influences of ignorance.

[85] See memoirs of Sam McAughtry, Brian Inglis and Mary Morris, and the works of Richard Doherty.

6.10 POST WAR

Even before the wars end the question of what would happen to the Irish volunteers after the war had begun to arouse public concern. In 1944 the British Legion in Dublin recommended that 'everything possible should be done to dissuade men from coming to their homes in Eire pending release from the services' owing to 'practically no work to be found for ex-servicemen in Eire' (TNA, DO 35/1229). British opinion added the expectation that those who had shown 'loyalty' to Britain should be treated as heroes, even in their own land. Sean O'Casey had pointed out that the participation of the Irish in WW2 as simply an extension of a long history fighting Irish in 'England's Wars' and drew attention to the fact that these men were destined to be uncelebrated when they returned home (O'Casey, 1944, p. 17), as had been the case in the First World War. Hubert Gough' s letter to the Times urging the British government to give Unemployment benefits to those Irish who had accrued it in Britain, even if those entitled returned to Eire, because 'They gave their services when needed and as long as they were needed (and) deductions have been made from their wages for unemployment insurance' (*The Times*, 12/01/1945, p.5), emphasising a growing feeling of gratitude in those who knew of the Irish volunteers. Brigadier AG Hewson concurred, adding 'They volunteered to come to England in her time of need and are owed a debt which should be repaid' owing to the 'distress and poverty of many of the ex-servicemen' living in Eire' (*The Times*, 03/04/1945, p.3). Though the British government ensured Irish ex-servicemen could avail of National Insurance benefits after returning to Ireland, a principle written into the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921, unemployment benefit was not extended to those leaving Britain, not least because of the amount of work this would involve, and a semi-official shunning of the Irish State due to neutrality. This undoubtedly led to many Ex-servicemen choosing to settle in Britain, where even if they could not find work in booming post-war reconstruction, unemployment benefits would at least be paid.

Concern for the fate of the volunteers was at its height around VE day, after Churchill's victory speech made special mention of the paradox of the Irish in the British Forces, dividing de

Valera's motivations 'so much at variance with the temper and instinct of thousands of Southern Irishmen, who hastened to the battle to prove their ancient valour', from those the Irish people. Churchill's statements of Irish government 'frolics' (W.S. Churchill, 13/05/1945) with the Axis legations in Dublin, alongside news of a near riot at Trinity College Dublin over the flying of a British flag in place of an Irish Tricolour, undoubtedly affected volunteers in the Irish forces who felt aggrieved by Churchill's victory comments on de Valera. Mary Morris downplays the flag incident in her diary but took issue with anti-Irish remarks by 'some arrogant young subalterns', leading her to defend de Valera, though it is clear she does not admire him, and to dispute their accusations that Ireland is was 'a hotbed of Nazism' (6/6/1945, Morris, 1945, IWM). Irish volunteers no doubt felt their own contribution being belittled, and their state charged with a shameful abdication of responsibility. Predictably the Ulster newspapers put these accusations in their most biased form, after de Valera's answer to Churchill's victory speech restated the rights of small nations against their larger neighbours. The *Belfast Newsletter* charged that 'Mr De Valera's heroics about self-defence deceived nobody, least of all his own people. British Sea Power alone saved Ireland from a German invasion…. May the day be not too far distant when an ashamed and repentant Eire will realise how much it owes to them' (*Belfast Newsletter*, 14/05/1945, p.5). Once again, the established narrative of the Irish people being against neutrality returns, but without acknowledgement of the contribution of Irish volunteers.

That is not to say that the British government was inconsiderate to the special needs of Irish volunteers. Viscount Addison, writing in October 1945, recommended 'special consideration' for the early release of Irish volunteers where it 'is justified, and that release from the forces will enable the man to resettle in Eire, while delay might ruin his prospects'. He did so on the basis that 'it is really unfair on these Irishmen to try to apply to them exactly the same standards as are enforced in this country. These men from Eire are volunteers…who…On their return they cannot hope for benefits from their own government but on the contrary may even be exposed to disabilities or become objects of local criticism' (*TNA, DO 35/1229/28*). This reaction was no doubt influenced by reports from Maffey that he was being asked by the families of Irish

volunteers for his help in securing their expedient return to Eire, alongside stories of courts martial involving volunteers returning to Eire (*TNA, DO 35/1229*).

Undoubtedly, the actions of the Irish government immediately after the war played into the hands of those who felt the worst of de Valera. Even before the last stern measures passed under the Emergency Powers Act before it was curtailed, British newspapers had revealed the plight of some Irish volunteers. Reports emerged of events in the Dail, where Dr T.F. O'Higgins of Fine Gael questioned the actions of the government for court martialling returning soldiers after he had been assured that no action would be taken against Irish Army deserters in Dail three days before. Ulster Newspapers reported his speech which suggested that the men were effectively being court-martialled 'because they had soldiers blood in their veins', and that the government was running a vendetta against them (*Belfast Newsletter*, 22/06/1945, p.2). In October 1945, when one of the last Emergency orders barred 4,020 deserters from the Irish to the British Forces from employment, benefits, pensions, and all work created by public funds, for a period of seven years, with British newspapers reporting O'Higgins continued opposition in the Dail, and some characterised the measure as if it were a prison sentence (*Daily Mail*, 19/10/1945, p.3). Reporting Minister of Defence, Oscar Traynor's denial of victimisation, the *Daily Express* also reported that the appeal to annul the decree was lost without a vote taking place (*Daily Express*, 19/10/1945, p.3). British editorials saw the action as immoral, harsh, an affront to the freedoms the soldiers fought for and giving comfort to the forces of evil. The editor of the *Daily Mirror* urged the people of Eire to 'repudiate Mr de Valera's cruel attack upon their brave sons and brothers', conceding that the action was legally viable but characterising it morally repugnant (*Daily Mirror*, 20/10/1945, p.2). The *Belfast Newsletter* added 'This victimisation of soldiers who have fought in the war has caused widespread indignation to all except those who still regard England as their perpetual enemy' (*Belfast Newsletter*, 24/10/1945, p.6).

6.11 Conclusions

Irish volunteers in the British Forces were, in the end, doubly excluded from a share in the glory of victory. In Britain, and despite Churchill's lionisation of Irish volunteers, tributes were rare. The invisibility of the volunteers only added to British bitter feeling against the Irish government and de Valera. When the war was over, rumours that the Irish spied for the Nazi's re-surfaced, in two post-war films (Webster, 2018, p. 251) and books full of fabulous tales of safe harbour for U-boats (West, 1998). In Ireland, some volunteers who had deserted the Irish Forces were punished by emergency order, and preference for work was often given to those demobbed from the Irish forces. Their choice to serve in the British Forces was derided by some whose opinion was that 'Every citizen of this neutral state who joined a foreign army did an actual or potential wrong to his own country' and 'the only place of honour was and duty for the Irish a soldier was in the Irish Army' ('The Leader'. Quoted in Roberts, 2000, p. 174), and this view was given official sanction. In the main, those volunteers returning to Eire found no place in the historical discourse of 'the Emergency', because that discourse was one that happened within Ireland rather than outside it, and those who had volunteered had left this discourse behind.

British attitudes, however, were moulded by wartime expedience and historical associations. Initially the Irish in the British Forces were regarded as part of a tradition of service, the mainstay of which was the Anglo-Irish officer class. However, by World War Two the Irish represented, overall, a diversity of religion, social class, political inclination, and regional background. Steven O'Connor has shown that by the end of the war these classes amounted to 20% of Irish officers (O'Connor, 2014, p. 185), and these doubtless influenced perceptions of the Irish amongst those under their charge. Initially perceived as 'the fighting Irish' before fear of invasion from France became widespread, neutrality did not make the position of Irish volunteers seem anomalous or paradoxical. However, by the time of the Blitzkrieg in the Low Countries and France, with neutrality perceived as no defence against invasion, but rather an invitation, paradox began to explain Irish motivations. The Irish volunteers to the British Forces had made their

choice to side with Britain against tyranny and must therefore have seen the war as the British did, and those that did not were deemed to be aiding the attackers by stepping aside. Evidence of the true, complex, motivations of Irish volunteers was widely available, but many did not understand conditional Irish loyalty to the British Forces. That these people fighting in the British Forces often supported neutrality, also contributed to a narrative of 'Paradoxical Irishness', where the state would remain neutral if its people had to fight for it to remain so. The British public, it seemed, preferred to believe that the 'good' Irish joined the 'good' war and the 'bad' Irish remained aloof.

The stereotype of the 'fighting Irish' also contributed to this perception, by alluding to past glories of Irish Battalions. The contribution of the Anglo-Irish Commanders in the British Forces was lauded, yet these were rarely portrayed as Irish outside of Ireland and attempts to recognise the Irish volunteers in an Irish Battalion were also popular, but opposition from Ulster resulted in a battalion with no specific association with Eire, or indeed many Irish troops. The 'fighting Irish' stereotype was also tempered by eulogizing Irish heroes, but not as 'a dreamer', or a hero of Gaelic Legend, often stereotypes of Irish 'tall tales'. Men like Brendan Finucane were portrayed as practical, quiet, ordinary men doing their duty, without drawing too much attention to themselves; acting similarly to the way stereotypically British heroes were expected to act. As the war continued British attitudes to the Irish in the Forces grew more polarised, as the Battle of the Atlantic raged on. There grew a discourse where Irish emigrants were portrayed as being ashamed of their country's neutrality, and where Eire was cutting itself off from reality began to emerge. Those who did not volunteer for the forces became seen as part of a backward and isolationist culture, controlled by de Valera, and invariably identified as Anti-British. Attempts to show that Irish neutrality was not anti-British generally failed.

The Army considered the possibility of fifth column activity by Irish soldiers within the Army and found evidence of German attempts to undermine the loyalty of Irish volunteers, but found these attempts had little effect. Irish soldiers themselves reported little discrimination, though some were upset by the D-Day travel ban, many considered this militarily necessary and

some questioned continued neutrality after the threat of invasion had passed. British soldiers mostly tended to agree with public opinion that the Irish had been poorly led into neutrality against their will viewing Irish comrades as the Irish on the 'right side', and thus there was little resentment of neutrality, although isolated incidents occurred.

The Post-war actions of the Irish state tended to bolster these views, and a discourse emerged where the Irish were perceived as being ashamed of the volunteers, and the actions taken against Irish Army deserters gave credence to the theory that those who volunteered for the British Forces had identified with Britain and were being punished for doing so. Though there was a British public discourse in favour of recognising the Irish contribution and making sure that these men received all the benefits they were entitled to in Britain, this, in effect, continued to uphold the distinction between those Irish who supposedly upheld British values, by staying in Britain, and those Irish that repudiated them, by returning to Eire. It seemed to most in Britain that the Irish had made their choice in the war for 'freedom' and had chosen the wrong side.

7 THE ENEMY WITHIN: AXIS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Irish neutrality meant that Eire could not break diplomatic relations with Axis or Allied Nations as doing so for one necessarily meant favouring the other. However, as the only neutral part of the British Empire, and considering its proximity to the home nations, its open border with the United Kingdom and a certain cultural antipathy towards Ireland and the Irish, it was easy for Britons to expect preferential treatment *and* that Ireland would be a potential source of leakage of military intelligence. Initially public disquiet was concerned with the activities of the IRA who were often expected to collaborate with German agents. However, by 1941 the expectation of IRA collaboration notably lessened, but apprehension over Axis espionage activities, especially by the Axis legations, reached new heights. Any plans for an Axis invasion of Ireland were of differing significance to Britain than to Eire because both 'Plan Kathleen' and 'Case Green' were intended only as feints to draw fire from a simultaneous invasion of Britain. For Eire, the likelihood of invasion by Germany was low because of the protection afforded the whole of the British Isles by the Royal Navy and Air Force, while pre-emptive invasion by Britain, to prevent encirclement, was deemed much more likely. Coupled with the shared need for the extent of Anglo-Irish intelligence collaboration to be kept secret, these factors contributed to a public perception that Eire was a threat to British intelligence security. Additionally, public distrust of Irish motivations, intentions and competence also clashed with Irish sensitivity 'not only about their independence, but about their ability to do all that was necessary themselves', and it was therefore necessary to 'let it appear that every measure was carried out by the Irish on their own initiative and not at the request of the British' (O'Halpin, 2003, p. 24). This chapter will analyse changing public perceptions of the Nazi espionage threat in Eire.

7.2 BRITISH INTELLIGENCE

Ignorance of Ireland and the Irish caused a lack of understanding which was partly a result of having no British official diplomatic representative, intelligence liaison or military attaches in the new Irish state between 1922 and 1938. For British Naval intelligence this meant an intelligence gap that Godfrey, head of Naval Intelligence, admitted was an oversight, writing 'I realise now, that, in 1939, we knew very little about Ireland of the Irish; had we known more we might have tackled the problem effectively from the start' (*TNA, ADM 22/3486*). This deficiency was also apparent in the public who, alongside Government and Intelligence, were equally unable to assess the validity of the many reports, rumours and lies being reported from Eire. Confusion in the British Intelligence community was also caused by British policy pulling in different directions. In this state of unease British policy, as it had done throughout Irish history, remained one of balancing between accommodation and confrontation. In times where Britain itself was under direct threat of invasion it was this lack of determined policy which caused confusion enough to make any rumour about Ireland believable. Indeed, intelligence received, which was possibly planted, either by mischievous German sailors or German Intelligence (McMahon, 2008, p. 300), also added to the confusion.

In the first year of the war the British intelligence gap was filled by several SIS operatives, often retired or reservist Irish naval officers such as Lt Michael Mason[86], whose activities 'often exceeded their mandates and were a source of embarrassment to London' (McMahon, 2008, p. 291). However, with the appointment of a Naval Attaché, and the use of wireless transmitters to communicate, these amateur 'spies' relayed what little, often anecdotal, information they had to SIS in London. As McMahon argues the lack of information coming from Eire Coast-watch[87] was

[86] Lt Mason, a RN Reservist, was arrested after letting slip he had a RNVR commission while on a west coast 'sailing holiday' and was accused of spying. After being held for a week at the beginning of the war Maffey negotiated his release.
[87] Eire Coast-watch reported only four sightings of U-boats from September 1939 to May 1940 (May 1940, *TNA, ADM 116/4600*)

initially interpreted as being due to inability and inefficiency[88], rather than the possibility that Germany was being careful not to infringe Irish neutrality. Opinions on Eire Coast Watching were clouded by cultural expectation from the start. When all sites were equipped with telephones in June 1940, British Intelligence were still unsatisfied, reporting the 'personnel in some of those recently visited seemed anything but nautically minded and…can hardly be relied upon' (*TNA, PREM 3/129/2*). Though the HMS Tamura made a disguised tour of the Irish West coast in order to find German U-Boats, and found none, its Captain was still suspicious of a population he considered 'perfectly capable of anything' (*TNA, ADM 199/1829*). Again, a lack evidence was interpreted as a result of insufficient effort and aerial reconnaissance was drafted in (Beesly, 1980, p. 137). In contrast to the SIS, those in the Dominions Office, with more experience of Irish affairs, were inclined towards scepticism. Maffey was a general, though not entirely equivocal, counterbalance to the susceptibility of some of the Intelligence services, branding most reports rumours of no special significance, and arguing that there was 'no indication of a storm brewing' (*TNA, DO 35/1107/12*). Walshe suggested the real possibility that all both governments good work could be undone by 'well-meaning busybodies who are ignorant of …Ireland and the abiding determination of its people to work out their own destiny' (*NAI, DFA 2006/39*, 17/07/1940). Yet still, British Intelligence assumed the worst of Ireland not only due to cultural antipathies, but also because the stakes for Britain were so high. Where British Intelligence was struggling to understand Ireland, it is perhaps inevitable that newspapers and public opinion were equally unable to believe that the Irish were working in British interests.

7.3 U-Boats

Fear over the activity of U-Boats in Irish waters was evident in the War Cabinet within days of the outbreak of war (Gilbert, 1993a, p. 28), and questions were to be asked in Parliament (*Daily Mirror*, 28/10/1939, p.4) the following month. Those with little experience of the Irish

[88] The fifth column panic equally gripped Churchill, who dismissed Sir Vernon Kell as head of MI5 for not doing enough to uncover it (McMahon, 2008, p. 306).

west coast, knowing its isolation and small population, tended to believe rumours that 'Fishermen in this area (Donegal) often see submarines…(and) get a ready market for fresh catches of Fish'[89], and believed that U-Boats could venture into notoriously dangerous and rocky inlets and 'lie stationary for days at a time' (*TNA, PREM 3/129/2*). This attitude was notable in Northern Ireland with HI in Belfast recording public questions over '…West Coast harbours in Eire as potential enemy submarine bases' (4/7/1940, *TNA, INF 1/264*). Naval intelligence was by July 1940 admitting '…there is little confirmation of landings of U-boats except in one or two instances at Dingle and Kerry[90] and probable communication with the shore in Donegal Bay' (*TNA, PREM 3/129/2*), yet this news did not reach the public, who, in this heady period particularly, often disbelieved official news[91]. Newspapers reported the landing of torpedoed ships survivors in Ireland by U-Boats, arguing that if this happened more sinister practices were possible. In parliament Northern Ireland MP Dr James Little charged that U-Boats were being refuelled off the Eire coast and described that believing Irish assurances that this was not the case as 'putting the glass to the blind eye with a vengeance' (*Daily Herald*, 14/10/1940, p.3; *Newcastle Journal*, 14/10/1940, p.1). As a result of these accusations the subject was brought up in Parliament again (*Hampshire Telegraph and Post,* 18/10/1940, p.9). Lord Snell stated in the House of Lords, and Duff Copper in the Commons, that there was no evidence of such actions (*Manchester Evening News,* 22/10/1940, p. 6) and the *Daily Telegraph* explained the allegations were 'ridiculed in Eire official quarters'. The paper reported that to supply the U-Boats 'would involve a big organisation and fleets of lorries' where 'no such organisation exists' and where 'petrol…is strictly rationed and petrol pumps are closely supervised by the police or military' (*Daily Telegraph*, 22/10/1940, LMHA). *The Sunday Express* also stated the obvious by asking 'What stocks of heavy oil for submarines are to be found in small coast ports, and isn't it easier to go to French ports to refit and refuel?' (*Sunday Express*, 10/08/1941, p.8). Some measure of the offensiveness of these

[89] Instead of taking their catches inland they would somehow have preferred to sail up to a to a heavily armed U-boat on the off chance of selling a few Herring.
[90] These were cases of U-Boats landing survivors of torpedoed ships.
[91] HI in1940 reported feeling that 'we get the truth but not the whole truth' in the news (16/8/1940, *TNA, INF 1/264*).

accusations to the Irish was articulated by Lord Strabolgi, also in the Lords, spoke of his experience of the West of Ireland arguing that 'the idea that you can convey large quantities of heavy oil fuel, or anything else, to supply German submarines, without it being known, is grotesque' (Quoted in Bew, 2012, p. xxiii). However, rumour and expectation persisted despite the intelligence services being convinced that reports could 'usually be traced to idle gossip' and that 'no real evidence has been found that U-Boats use bases in Eire' (2/12/1940, *TNA, ADM 1/11104*). That these expectations remained news despite a lack of corroborating evidence was an indication of the strength of feeling that the Irish could not be trusted and helped maintain Allied pressure against Irish neutrality.

7.4 The Axis Legations

As Eunan O'Halpin has shown, G2 had been monitoring the activities of Pro-German organisations in Eire since early 1938, even before MI5 had any knowledge the Fichte Bund in Eire (O'Halpin, 2003, pp. 41-42), but also argues 'that there were gaps in Anglo-Irish security sharing' in the early war years, before the mechanics of the Intelligence collaboration had been settled[92] (O'Halpin, 2003, p. 6). Yet, because of the IRA S-Plan campaign and the execution of the Coventry bombers, most disquiet over the enemy within Eire concentrated on the threat posed by the IRA. Even so there were some indications that Axis presence in Eire was an area of concern early in the war. Eunan O'Halpin argues that before the period up to February 1940 'was notorious for the large amount of reports, enquiries and rumours' (O'Halpin, 2003, pp. 51-52). Later that year newspapers began to report 'questions' to be put to Mr de Valera concerning 'the only German journalist at large in the British Empire...Dr Karl Petersen', whether 'the original blackout in Dublin was stopped at the request of the German minister', if there were 'short-wave transmitters being used (at the German legation)' and 'Does he know who is financing German propaganda leaflets in Eire? etc. etc.' (*Birmingham Post*, 08/07/1940, p.2). Paul Bew has argued

[92] American Intelligence did not share its knowledge with Eire and guarded the ULTRA codes 'jealously' (O'Halpin, 2003, p. 6).

that at this time, before an Allied victory was certain, 'Dublin… had a greater priority: keeping the Germans sweet' (Bew, 2012, p. xxi) and this interpretation was undoubtedly prevalent contemporaneously, and became represented by attitudes towards German diplomatic ties. Newspapers in Spring 1940 made a campaign of the issue of the Axis Nationals and Legations in Eire, including the *Sunday Dispatch*, *Evening Standard,* and the *News Review*[93], which suggested that 'strange men with square heads began striding self-importantly in and out of the…legation' (*News Review,* 02/05/1940, TNA35/1107/12) as part of a huge team of commercial attaches sent to spy on Britain from Ireland. The press campaign resulted in a protest from the Irish Government, which was confident that information was not being leaked in this way (3/5/1940, *TNA, DO 35/1107/12*). Such public disquiet unrelated to the IRA was rare before 1941, but as it became clearer that IRA activity had practically ceased, the focus of British fears over Ireland changed towards the activities of the Axis legations.

By 1941 the presence of a German Legation within the Empire, near an open border, where British Forces were training and guarding the vital sea lanes around Ulster, was characterised in newspapers as a 'Trojan Horse' and 'the advance guard of German air-borne troops' (*Daily Mirror*, 12/06/1941, p.2), 'grossly overstaffed' and 'an active and well-organised espionage centre' (*Perthshire Advertiser,* 16/07/1941, p.4). Some papers also asserted de Valera was aware of this, but his preventative measures had failed 'and the leakages have continued' (*Devon and Exeter Gazette,*17/03/1941, p.4), and one predicted the direction in which public opinion would turn, given time, by suggesting that British security was so threatened by the Axis legations that 'Those who are not our friends must be treated as our enemies' (*Daily Mirror*, 12/06/1941, p.2). One paper later noted the transition in the focus of British fears by highlighting 'Disclosure in the Dail Eireann that Hitler's spies occasionally descend into Eire by parachute…', 'hundreds of IRA men under lock and key at this moment' and 'Dr Karl H. Petersen... (making) himself prominent at all important gatherings...' (*Yorkshire Post*, 31/01/1942, p.4). Wilder public accusations included that Rudolf Hess had really been on his way to Ireland when he landed in

[93] See *Sunday Dispatch* 31/3/1940, *Evening Standard* and *News Review* 2/5/1940

Scotland in 1941(*MO File Report 708 - Broadcast for North American Service*, 1941), and that 'I bet Lord Haw-Haw's in Ireland by now' (MO File Report 2232 – Easter Opinions). Perceptions of the Irish were such as to give such statements at least an air of possibility. The press, on occasion, suggested the British government was complicit in allowing this situation to continue, with one suggesting 'in spite of the knowledge that…valuable information is constantly being passed to the enemy, (we) have accepted the situation without much complaint' (*Aberdeen Press & Journal*, 13/01/1942, p.2). This simplistic view was, of course, far from the truth.

That is not to say that no propaganda activities were organised by the German Legation. SIS established that the legation in Dublin organised and funded the dissemination of news from German news services and 'cultivated individual members of the government and influenced the press censors to exclude newspaper stories that favoured Britain' (McMahon, 2008, p. 373). In December 1940 SIS reported Berlin had requested the legation staff embark on an active policy of cultivating friendly relations

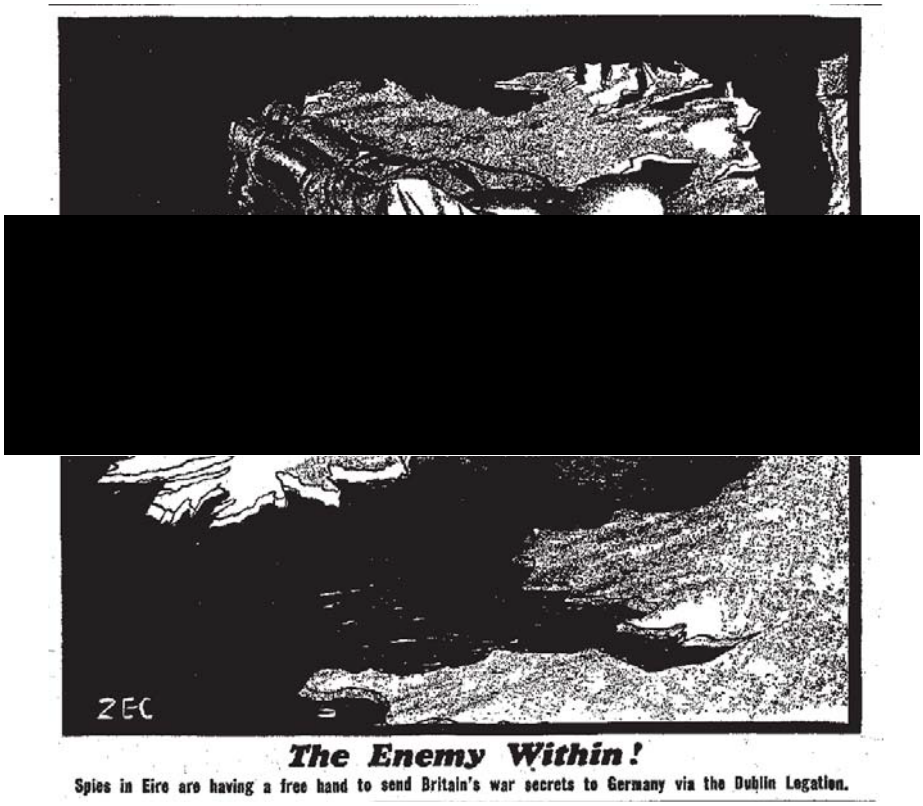


Figure 14: The Enemy (still) Within (Daily Mirror, 17/04/1940)

by attending cultural events, travelling the country, receiving guests, and thereby creating a system of 'verbal propaganda, whereby intermediaries would spread, stories about bad conditions in Britain ….' (McMahon, 2008, p. 373). Such activities were not unnoticed by the British press who suggested the German press attaché Petersen and Minister Hempel were responsible to Henning Thomsen, said to be 'Ribbentrop's No 1 agent outside Germany', who socialised mostly at Gaelic League entertainments hoping that 'discreetly listening to the monotony of fiddle and pipe will pay dividend some time, somewhere' (*Daily Express*, 08/09/1941, p.2). Such a programme of 'verbal propaganda' was also the policy of John Betjeman, which he dubbed 'good relations', and was fully sanctioned by the MOI which believed overt British propaganda would be counterproductive in Ireland (Cole, 1996, p. 34). Inevitably the British press drew no conclusions at British policy but portrayed the German efforts as insidious. However, reports from visitors to Ireland related few occasions where this German effort undermined the Irish governments adherence to neutrality and relayed that Walshe insisted 'the whole British notion of the power of the German Minister in Dublin was greatly exaggerated', and that he was, in truth, 'just like a man in a cage' whose every movement was watched (*TNA, INF 1/786*). The propaganda activities that occurred were not, by any standard, what could be called espionage.

The balance of Irish neutrality was much more complicated than public opinion could know. Due to the need to protect the secrecy of Anglo-Irish intelligence co-operation those outside Allied Intelligence and War Cabinet circles were unaware of the details, and the extent, of the scrutiny that Irish military intelligence had placed the legations under. Particularly significant to newspaper and public unease was the presence of a Radio transmitter in the German embassy, yet it could not become common knowledge that Irish Intelligence preferred to intercept radio traffic rather than closing it down; a policy with which MI5 and the CIGS agreed[94]. Additionally, all telephone lines, cables, and diplomatic bags, including to the US, were diverted through Britain

[94]Alanbrooke Diaries 4th Feb. 1942 – After Churchill asked the CIGS if it was best to pressure the German legation out of Dublin; 'We had discovered that as we had broken the German cipher…it was perhaps better to remain with the devil we knew… Winston apparently wished for another answer…' (Danchev & Todman, 2002)

to facilitate intelligence gathering, by both Irish and British Intelligence, and all wire taps, and Legation radio transmission transcripts were shared (31/10/1939, *TNA, CAB 65/1/66*). An attempt to increase the number of staff at the German Legation was stopped by de Valera by ordering their arrest if the plane landed (R Fisk, 1985, p. 251; McCullagh, 2018, p. 201). Yet still, not only did the newspapers doubt the efficiency of Irish Intelligence, but Winston Churchill also continued to believe 'it could not be relied upon' (21/11/1939, *TNA, CAB 66/3/31*), and even occasionally disbelieved British Intelligence on Ireland[95]. In reality, 'Pre-war good relations' ensured all complaints about possible espionage, sabotage and Axis legation activities 'were dealt with by Liam Archer at G2 and almost without exception were found to be without foundation' (O'Halpin, 2003, pp. 51-52). Indeed, the German Legation were ordered to stay out of Irish affairs and Ambassador Hempel was at frequent pains to do so (McMahon, 2008, pp. 406-407; *UCDA, P150/2571*, 15/12/1941)[96] . By February 1942, MI5 officer with responsibility for Ireland, Cecil Liddell, had compiled a memo to Naval Intelligence which showed 'conclusively that the German legation as such is not actively engaged in espionage although it may be cognisant of what is going on' and that 'it is known that the legation has an illicit wireless set communicating with Germany. Messages from Germany are of almost daily occurrence but the messages to Germany are only very occasional' (West, 2005a, p. 228). By 1943, when the German diplomatic cipher had been broken, these conclusions were bolstered by rechecking of all previously recorded messages (McMahon, 2008, p. 406). Unknowing of these developments, and conditioned to expect the worst from Ireland, public opinion tended to question Irish competence and motives even further, sometimes believing the wildest of rumours, where it was interpreted that de Valera's banning of Charlie Chaplin's epic *The Great Dictator* was a sign of pro-German sympathies (*Daily Mirror*, 08/01/1941, p.2), and even that a German factory manager 'gave smoke signals to German aircraft from his factory chimney' (Sunday Express, 10/08/1941, p.8).

[95] WSC to Admiral Godfrey TNA, ADM 205/2 10 Nov 1939 – After SIS concluded German Wireless Stations were not reporting positions of British troops, Churchill wrote 'I do not believe the truth of the War Office statement that the whole of the German wireless has been examined and that nothing has been found supporting our accusation' (Gilbert, 1993a, p. 355)

[96] Herman Goertz, the most successful Nazi spy in Ireland, 'on his own admission was told to keep clear of the legation unless he found that this could not be avoided' (West, 2005a, p. 228)

Despite indications to the contrary most continued to believe that Eire was the main source of German Intelligence on Britain.

7.5 GERMANS IN EIRE

At the height of German blitzkrieg in Western Europe HI reported considerable 'spy scares' reaching hysterical proportions in places (30/5/1940, *TNA, INF 1/264*) and with awareness that neutral Ireland did not intern Axis nationals as Britain had done, rumour of German espionage activity in Eire became rife. In May 1940 HI reported rumours of a large 'fifth column nucleus' of German tourists in Eire and that Lord Haw-Haw was messaging these with code words in his radio broadcasts (18 & 19/5/1940, *TNA, INF 1/264*). In the same month *The People* reported that 'Ribbentrop is preparing to send a fresh batch of Nazi agents to Eire, to settle there under the guise of commercial experts and attaches at the German Legation in Dublin, and to direct German activities in England' (*The People*, 14/04/1940, p.9). Rumours of excess numbers of Germans in Eire persisted into 1941, where HI reported a prevalent rumour that a woman 'has seen with her own eyes many Germans in Dublin, and many more arriving lately' and 'that Eire has entered the war' (27/8/1941, *TNA, INF 1/292*), reflecting both common expectation and an element of wishful thinking. Fear of invasion was linked by one newspaper to thousands of 'potential fifth columnists (who) have joined the Eire Army volunteer reserve, the coast watch scheme and the local security corps' further expecting that 'in the event of a Nazi invasion, the gauleiters reserved by the Germans to govern North and South are to be men who are at the present moment hold high governmental positions in both administrations' (*Daily Gazette for Middlesborough*, 17/07/1940, p.6)[97].

Undoubtedly such rumour was encouraged by newspaper reports that 'there are 300 full-blooded German officials free to do what they like in Eire…They are assisted by an organisation

[97] The same article tenuously links possible Irish invasion to the fact that Hitler's brother Alois had married an Irish Woman in 1911. The marriage lasted only three years with Alois having returned to Germany by 1914 and bigamously marrying there in 1916. Adolf Hitler never visited Ireland and came to regard Alois' Irish son William Patrick Hitler, later drafted into the US Army, as an embarrassment.

of 3,000…regarded by Berlin as auxiliaries...' and opinion that the presence the legations as 'an affront to the empire' (*Western Mail,* 04/07/1941, p.2). De Valera was also portrayed as having thrown 'his protective cloak over the Nazi agents in his midst' (*Birmingham Gazette,* 31/03/1941, p.4). Some papers even suggested that Germans had infiltrated the government by emphasising de Valera's good relations with Eduard Hempel (*Daily Mail*, 01/04/1940, LHMA), while 'William Hickey' went so far as to suggest that De Valera had pursued 'a long correspondence' with Hitler 'early in the War', though admitting that this would be difficult to prove (Daily Express, 24/04/1941, p.2)[98]. In fact, the number of Axis nationals in Eire was known to the British government and their activities were under continued, shared surveillance by G2. By July 1940, a 'General Report on the Position in Eire' conveyed to the NID 'that there are 2,000 Germans in Eire is considered by the Crime Special Division of the Civic Guard to be without foundation. There are actually 318 Germans and 149 Italians in Eire' (July 1940, *TNA, PREM 3/129/2*), though this, of course, had no impact on public opinion that generally held that Ireland 'is only a hotbed of Nazi spies' (*MO File Report 1481 - Morale Report in October 1942*, 1942). The same rumours were also prevalent in the US, where, even after the Irish government confirmed to Washington in 1942 that there were only four Japanese people in Ireland, Brennan wrote 'It is difficult to believe that this is not the result of a deliberate campaign to put Ireland in the wrong in the eyes of the American people' (*NAI, DFA Secretary's Files P2*, 25/11/1942), a concern which resurfaced with the American Note Crisis in 1944.

Fifth Column panic in Britain was partly a reaction to shock and disbelief at the swift defeat of France and the Low Countries. Paul McMahon argues that even the Allied Intelligence communities, stunned by Blitzkrieg and searching for explanation of its success, concluded that fifth columns had been instrumental in German conquests and that such organisations would emerge in Britain ahead of invasion (McMahon, 2008, p. 306). It was not until 1942 that the

[98] There are, indeed, no records of correspondence between de Valera and Hitler. De Valera, a man of habit and strict diplomatic propriety, directed all affairs regarding Germany through the German Ambassador.

Abwehr's capabilities, or rather lack thereof [99], were understood and the threat in both countries was put into perspective (McMahon, 2008, p. 393). Initially, though British Intelligence 'had no precise knowledge' of the organisation they were fighting, yet 'they were convinced of its existence' (15/5/1940, *TNA, CAB 93/5*), and the British public were equally convinced, but unlike the British intelligence services, the public were never really disabused of their opinion.

7.6 IRISH INTELLIGENCE

Irish policy towards Britain was based on giving enough concessions to convince that the benefits of co-operation outweighed those of coercion, whilst at the same time being consistently neutral to avoid German distrust. Though de Valera had warned the German Minister in Eire that Irish neutrality must bear 'a certain consideration' (MacCartney, 1961, p. 471) towards Britain, as Eire was still politically, militarily, and economically reliant on Britain, the tightrope on which Eire had to balance was, due to Ireland's relative defencelessness, infinitely harder to walk than that of Britain's tightrope walk between accommodation and coercion of Eire. News of the IRA Magazine Fort raid in December 1939, which netted over one million rounds of ammunition from under the nose of the Irish Army, did not encourage British faith in Irish Intelligence. However, the Irish States reaction to this raid, which regained 90% of the losses, involved a complete reorganisation of G2 and a re-invigorated drive to create the most efficient Intelligence agency possible, intent on 'unleashing of the full force of the state on the IRA (Coogan, 1995, pp. 146-147).

Though British public opinion was convinced of Irish incompetence and ill-will, those more informed soon held different views. Within days of the opening of hostilities 'frequent reports' of German submarine bases off the coast of Eire were being noted by MI5 and newspapers

[99] By 1944 it was clear that, as in Britain, German Intelligence agents in Eire, their numbers, their efforts, their training, and equipment, were greatly overestimated and the execution of their purposes woefully inept. In April, Guy Liddell noted Radio sets dropped in Ireland 'were of a very high grade' but their voltage and crystals were incorrect for use in Britain or Eire (West, 2005a, p. 185). In the face of such ineptitude, it is hard to objectively understand how British Intelligence captured all German Spies in Britain (Masterman, 1973) and yet considered it impossible for the Irish Intelligence services to do the same.

and initially Guy Liddell believed there seemed 'little doubt that something of this kind is going on' (West, 2005b, p. 25). However, it was clear by early October 1939, that MI5 soon appreciated the ability and good intentions of Irish Intelligence with Guy Liddell discouraging the setting up of an SIS network in Eire to maintain 'frank' relations with G2, which he described as 'of great value to us'[100]. At the same time, he also suggested for the first time, and as he invariably did henceforth, that Naval Intelligence direct all their questions to Col. Archer at G2 for his input (West, 2005b, p. 37). Indeed, the NID had initially been surprised at the efficiency of Irish intelligence[101] but were, nevertheless, still suspicious, and established a loose network of informers, of which G2 were aware but declined to pursue because it generally confirmed the paucity of 'Fifth Column' activity (McMahon, 2008, p. 349). As the war progressed it became clearer that co-operation was more effective than covert activity. By 1942 MI5 had become so comfortable in its relationship with G2 that it allowed a suspected spy to visit Ireland after capture (West, 2005a, p. 46)[102]. However, outside intelligence communities, it was a frequent first assumption that the Irish would be uncooperative, incompetent, and evasive, but there are relatively few contemporary reports of specific leakages. Those that do exist were influenced not only by cultural expectation of Irish trouble, but also by memories of the First World War, anxiety over the effectiveness of the British War effort and the successes of the Nazi forces. Undoubtedly government campaigns urging the public to 'keep mum' and the cultural phenomena of spy thrillers also played their part.

7.7 LEAKAGES

Since the security services considered 'the actual crossing of the border into or out of Northern Ireland with its naval, military and Air establishments, dockyards and war factories, by

[100] This plan was also vetoed by the War Cabinet (O'Halpin, 2003, p. 59).
[101] Letter to Maffey from Machtig 9/10/1939 – 'We were very grateful for the early information about the Dingle Bay submarine (on the 4/10/1939). In fact, the Admiralty declined to believe that the news had come through so quickly, and we had to reassure them three times that it was true' (*TNA, DO 130/2*)
[102] Joseph Lenihan had been apprehended after being sent to Ireland by Nazi Intelligence after his capture in the Channel Islands. He had offered to become part of the 'Double Cross' scheme but was deemed too unreliable. He was considered, like several other captured spies, to have used the Abwehr only to gain free and safe passage back to Ireland.

persons resident in neutral Eire, could not be prevented or even controlled' (O'Halpin, 2003, p. 27), it was not surprising that the public regarded spies and fifth columnists as a real threat, especially in untrusted Eire. Even channels under British surveillance were suspect and newspapers reported cases of smuggled letters to Ireland. Reports note the jailing of Irish workers for 'communicating information which might directly or indirectly useful to the enemy' (*Birmingham Mail,* 21/09/1940, p.3), with one suggesting this was particularly dangerous as an uncensored letter had been found alongside a 'Young Ireland Songbook' of songs that were 'violently anti-British' (*Liverpool Evening Post*, 17/10/1942, p.3). A general suspicion, unlinked to any specific event, was evident most often in HI reports, and the report writers occasionally betray indications that they regard these rumours as commonplace, with one report noting 'there is the *usual crop* of parachute and bombing rumours' (22/5/1940, *TNA, INF 1/264*). When it came to rumours concerning Ireland, people appeared to be distrustful of their own government, so much that HI recommended 'The public should be told that the (Fifth Column) situation in Eire is not being ignored (19/5/1940, *TNA, INF 1/264*). However, some cases of specific accusations relating to specific events do emerge. On 11th Feb 1942 the battleships Gneisenau, Scharnhorst and Prinz Eugen escaped from Brest and through the English Channel and later press reports suggested advance weather conditions, vital to the escape, were sent from the Dublin German Legation (Reynold's News, 22/02/1942, LHMA)[103]. A month later, a report from RAF intelligence recorded that Dulanty 'maintained that secret-service liaisons between the Irish and British authorities…made it certain that the British must have known that there were *no such reports'* (*TNA, INF 1/786*), but that this of course could not be admitted. Equally secret was information discovered by Basil Liddell-Hart for his 'Notes for History', including that the Navy 'had been warned for weeks to be ready for their (the ships) emergence…', that RDF stations were broken down and that aerial reconnaissance had spotted the ships at sea, but this report was ignored as the ships commander overruled an inexperienced pilot who he thought had 'mistaken

[103] O'Halpin has argued that though this was true 'the same information was sent by several German meteorological aircraft in the area concerned, several hours before the Dublin transmission' (O'Halpin, 2003, p. 65).

some trawler for the Prinz Eugen' (Liddell-Hart, 1942, LHMA)[104]. However, in general, public opinion followed newspaper reports, blaming the German Minister in Dublin, thereby simplifying a complex problem, creating a simple solution that scapegoated two traditional enemies.

On the 19th of August 1942, the combined arms raid on Dieppe, Operation Jubilee, was launched with the objectives of testing new tactics, gathering intelligence, boosting morale, and demonstrating commitment to opening a second front. Soon after HI reports note public disquiet at the loss of life, and further reports indicated the public quickly sought explanation of these failures. Eight days after the raid official explanation that the raid was thrown off course was felt 'very weak, since the Germans might be expected to patrol the coast' and raised the question of German foreknowledge of the raid (27/8/1942, *TNA, INF 1/292*). By the 3rd of September an HI report noted belief that there was foreknowledge and that enemy prisoners had told British attackers that 'we knew four days ago that you were coming' (3/9/1942, *TNA, INF 1/292*). Additionally, contemporary intelligence circles suspected poor security during and before the raid, which had been called off at least once hours before launch and admitted 'two complete sets of operational orders and intelligence…were left on the beach', which had undoubtedly fallen into enemy hands (5/9/1942, West, 2005a). By the middle of September, it was clear that suspected security lapses and a belief that the 'nature and purpose of the raid have never been adequately explained' (17/9/1942, *TNA, INF 1/292*), combined to cause so much uncertainty that when Churchill admitted that casualties were around 50%, official protestations that the raid was successful were hardly believed (1 & 8/10/1942, *TNA, INF 1/292*). It became common belief that the huge casualty rate was due to German foreknowledge, initially blamed on the Canadians' (1/10/1942, *TNA, INF 1/292*), but by 1944 failure at Dieppe was felt 'due to leakage of information from Eire' (12/04/1944, *TNA, INF 1/292*). Returning soldiers impressions (8/10/1942, *TNA, INF 1/292*), the shock of failure, high loss of life and the lack of information had combined with cultural expectation of intelligence leakage, to make any rumour 'half-

[104] In an indication of the complexity of the Anglo-Irish wartime milieu Eugene Esmonde, from Drominagh Co. Tipperary, won a posthumous VC leading the belated attack on these ships.

expected confirmation of deeply-rooted suspicions' (Campbell, 1993, p. 13)[105]. It could also be similarly 'half-expected' that the information could have leaked[106] through Ireland and it was a short step from blaming the Canadians, who had suffered the largest losses and were Allies, to blaming the Irish who were not.

Roughly contemporaneous to the Dieppe raid concerns were also raised at direct flights from Lisbon and transatlantic flights landing in Eire. HI reports suspicion over an 'enemy passenger plane flies over Watford nightly on its way to Dublin, unmolested' (1/10/1942, *MO File Report 1431 - Morale in September 1942*, 1942; *TNA, INF 1/292*). Though these did create an ideal ingress for infiltrators O'Halpin argues this route was never used, that equal suspicion could be levelled at flights from Poole to Lisbon (O'Halpin, 2003, p. 72), and that all Irish mails sent this way were routed through British censorship (McMahon, 2008, p. 402). However, British opinion appeared to credit almost any rumours about Irish spy scares, including that 'Jimmy O'Dea, the comedian in BBC's *Irish Half Hour*…is said to be sending messages in code to the enemy (10/12/1942, *TNA, INF 1/292*). There were however a few voices offering alternative opinions against a general rumbling of discontent against Ireland.

7.8 ALTERNATIVE VIEWS

Postal and Telegraph censorship revealed, at least to government sources, that the Irish people were not, in general, likely to aid German espionage or sabotage. These revealed that '93%

[105] Deeply rooted suspicions appeared in Brian Garfield's *'The Paladin'* (1980), a novel concerning a British agent investigating U-boat stations in Donegal and offering details of the Dieppe raid to the German legation in Dublin.

[106] John Campbell shows that the *Daily Mail* printed details of the previous preparations, between postponement and the actual launch, gathered from locals on the Isle of Wight, and that Military Intelligence launched two investigations on suspected leaks (Campbell, 1993, pp. 5-6). Irish Historian J.P. Duggan argues Hempel leaked rumours of amphibious troop concentrations on the south coast (Duggan, 1989, pp. 177-178), though O'Halpin believes he reported this as if it was gossip (O'Halpin, 1995). David Irving argued that the Germans had foreknowledge of the raid, but Stephen Roskill argued the Germans expected raids in general rather than specifically at Dieppe (S. Roskill, 1964). Campbell argues the film *The Next of Kin*, on the betrayal of a raid on a submarine base in France, had been 'fairly widely distributed before Jubilee', priming the public for likely intelligence leaks, and cites censored Canadian soldiers letters which mention the film when arguing that the Germans were ready for them (Campbell, 1993, p. 6). The film's spy ring includes an Irishmen and a Belgian refugee blackmailed into helping them. They use 'a neutral port' to get the information to Germany (Dickinson, 1944)

of a total of 475 writers' express sympathy and admiration for Great Britain, and that one writer revealed 'we may be neutral…. but most of us are pro-British...'and one that 'I would not see England beaten at any time. I do not know what this country would do if she was' (8/6/1943, *TNA, CJ 4/30*). Another report argued 'we keep sending boatloads of men and food to England - and they are both first class. We could scarcely do more if we made a formal declaration' but feared, presciently, that after the war 'Ireland will just be in the soup, forgotten and ignored' (8/9/1943, *TNA, CJ 4/30*). Scottish socialist newspaper *Forward!* argued the Taoiseach's reply to the 'American Note', formally requesting the Irish government to disband the Axis legations in Dublin, was 'the only answer possible', adding 'the facts are that the Japanese representative (has) no diplomatic bag, and…the German representative has had no such bag since the war started, and…neither has had any means of communicating with their countries save by cable, which passes through London' (Forward!, 18/03/1944, LHMA). While the *Western Morning News*, after the subsequent travel ban on Ireland was instigated, argued that this should not be a vindictive measure or a penalty for neutrality, but recognised, again presciently, that the 'American Note' was delivered to gain 'a reaffirmation of Eire's attitude to justify such a step, clearly desirable though it was in view of impending military operations'. The paper also added that 'to describe it as "economic sanctions" imposed against a country for exercising a right conferred upon it by a statute…would do no good to the Allied cause now or in the future' (Western Morning News, 14/03/1944, p. 2). However, most newspapers continued to see the Irish stance as an attempt to 'both have its cake and eat it' and arguing that the legations 'staffs are solely occupied in spying upon our military preparations' (*Daily Herald,* 22/03/1944, p.2) choosing to disbelieve that Irish intelligence was competent, and its intentions true to de Valera's continued promise that he did 'not want Irish freedom to become a source of British insecurity' (20/9/1939, *TNA, DO 35/1107/9*).

7.9 THE AMERICAN NOTE CRISIS

The persistence of Irish Governments determination to preserve neutrality combined with the necessarily secret nature of intelligence collaboration, created a frustration at the Irish stance which came to a head with the 'American Note' in early 1944. The US ambassador in Dublin, David Gray, initially worked well with his Irish hosts but soon became frustrated with the Irish refusal to grant the use of the Treaty Ports. As early as September 1941 the Irish government was concerned at Gray's 'general thesis…that we cannot be pro-Irish without being Pro-German' (*NAI, DFA Secretary's Files P48A*, 1941) and by December asked the State Department for a more friendly attitude, especially from Gray, in the interest of American Irish relations (*NAI, DFA Secretary's Files P2*, 1941). However, Gray continued to vent his frustrations, reportedly making the incendiary charge that Eire would give Hitler asylum after the war[107] and telling journalists to 'tell the American people that Ireland is not standing by the United States' (*Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, 05/12/1942, p.3). The American Note was the culmination of Gray's policy designed to get 'the Eire Government on record as having refused a request which had the object of safeguarding the lives of American soldiers, sailors and airmen at a vital point in the war' (*TNA, CAB 66/46*), despite the objections of most interested parties (R Fisk, 1985, pp. 539-591). Indeed, by the end of 1943, the Admiralty, now using the Azores as anchorage, confessed they no longer needed the treaty Ports, and the Air Staff and Dominions Office warned strategic considerations should be considered less vital than political ones (3/9/1943, *TNA, CAB 65/39/18*), indicating that British support for the American Note was mainly to bolster a political purpose; that is to justify the isolation of Ireland in preparation for the launching of D-Day.

In the Eire government Gray's attitude was interpreted as part of a plan, suspected since 1940, where a request that Eire expel the Axis representatives would set the preconditions necessary to justify at least the taking of the Treaty Ports, if not the reconquest of Ireland (*NAI,*

[107] Quoted as disagreeing that Hitler would commit suicide he argued 'Lots of people seem to think that Hitler will hang, as they seemed to think the Kaiser would last time. But I think that he will go to Eire, hire a magnificent lodge, and live happily ever after' (*Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, 05/12/1942).

DFA Legal Advisors Papers, 07/02/1940). Guy Liddell astutely guessed this interpretation was behind Irish government thinking when he wrote of the trial of Goertz, arguing 'They probably fear that we should use this case as a pretext for pressing the Eire government to forego its neutrality and turn the Germans out' (6/1/1942, West, 2005b, p. 207). Eunan O'Halpin argues that the Eire government, fearing Gray would be behind any such moves, often sidestepped his involvement in security liaisons with the US because he was so mistrusted, and that US policy towards Ireland was 'framed in isolation' from the activities of Allied intelligence agencies (O'Halpin, 2000, pp. 82-83). In this atmosphere the Note, which ignored the opinions of allied intelligence and the significance of Anglo-Irish intelligence cooperation, did nothing to allay fears that Ireland was to be invaded.

Issued on the 21st of February 1944 the American Note charged that Irish neutrality had 'in fact operated and continues to operate in favor (sic) of the Axis Powers and against the United Nations on whom your security and the maintenance of your national economy depend' through 'highly organized espionage' (*UCDA, P150/2658*, 21/02/1944). The Irish reply refused the request on the grounds that the removal of the legations could be recognised as a first step towards war which would negate Irish neutrality. It also pointed out that the Note itself did not include 'a single instance of neglect' or 'proof of injury to American interests' (*NAI, DFA Secretary's files A53*, 21/02/1941). The Note was interpreted in Dublin as an ultimatum and the army was put on invasion alert. The Irish Government was incensed; they had done all they could to thwart espionage, knew this was effective, as did the Allied Intelligence agencies, but believed this was an attempt to condemn Ireland in the eyes of the world. The British authorities belatedly tried to limit the impact of the note for fear of destabilising the erstwhile productive intelligence liaisons with G2, with Maffey insisting that there would be no sanctions (*NAI, DFA Secretary's files A53*, 14/03/1944). Walshe tellingly argued that 'the mind of the ordinary man in the street in England would now be prepared to accept anything and everything in the nature of espionage bogies…' and that effect of this for Ireland 'could not have been worse if there had been some evil genius in the Ministry of Information to push them on' (*NAI, DFA Secretary's files A53*, 14/03/1944).

McMahon argues that the American Note crisis was driven by two factors: a lack of intelligence co-operation between the US and Eire, and the US domestic political situation (McMahon, 2008, p. 418). However, Walshe was correct in his argument that British public opinion would be deeply affected by this attempt to force the Eire government into publicly taking sides. In March 1944 MO notes that 'Eire's refusal to get rid of the German and Japanese diplomats' as a major theme of public discourse' and was 'one of the questions most frequently discussed by the public' (*MO File Report 2065 - Morale in March 1944*, 1944). General approval of the request and condemnation of the refusal resulted in almost universal support for the travel ban that isolated Ireland, North and South, in preparation for the D-Day landings. Newspapers reacted by announcing 'Mr de Valera's rejection of the United States Government 's request to clear Axis agents out of Eire is deplorable but hardly surprising', with most arguing, as the Note had insisted, that it had been proved that Axis representatives were conducting espionage as they had done in other neutral countries, but provided no specific examples (*Yorkshire Evening Post*, 11/03/1944, p.4). Others argued that despite Eire's 'good faith' its governments 'impartial integrity is not sufficient protection against Axis duplicity', and that arguing neutrality was the will of the Irish people was pointless as well as incorrect (*Daily Herald,* 14/03/1944, p.2). Some highlighted the Irish annoyance that the US did not expel the Axis diplomats while neutral and that ignoring the will of the people would have been 'undemocratic' (*The Observer*, 12/03/1944, LHMA), but such arguments were rare. However, there are also indications at this point that the question of Irish neutrality was becoming irrelevant for most as it had become clear that Ireland was not strategically vital, though some could not forgive the chagrin that Ireland had caused previously. Diarist #5349 wrote of public 'impatience' at Irish neutrality, but also 'no ill-will in particular', adding that it was time that 'we just forget about them and get on with our own job'. The Diarist even saw treatment of Eire as 'good publicity' for Britain because she represented the self-determination of small nations, even if it is 'carried to extremes'. The writer allows that 'from their point of view they were right' but this realisation is begrudging and acknowledges the influence of past wariness of the 'the Irish Question', concluding 'of course they are crazy' (13/03/1944, MO Diarist 5349*)*. This grudging acceptance that Eire might have a self-determined

future was to become more widespread after the war, but it was not to be accepted without bitterness.

However, most interpretations followed Gray's intention that Eire had now shown herself far out of step with the Allies. MO diarist #5157, a retired policeman, indicates the hardening of public attitudes by arguing of de Valera that 'whatever we did wouldn't please him…I think the English people will want it settled once and for all after the war whether we are to regard them as irreconcilable' (10/3/1944, MO Diarist 5157). Gray's plan to finally get Irish neutrality on record as being advantageous to the Axis, condemned in public opinion, and to be isolated from the rest of the world until at least the end of the war, had been successful.

7.10 Isolation of Ireland

The American Note had cemented many aspects of previous attitudes towards Ireland, especially that Axis espionage in Eire had been proven. HI reports show opinion that is 'indignant and disgusted at Eire's refusal to remove Axis consular and diplomatic representatives' and that 'relatives of merchant seamen and naval men are especially angry' (14/3/1944, *TNA, INF 1/292*). Subsequent reports emphasise 'unanimous approval' of the ban on travel and opinion that 'even if we cannot take her over, stock and barrel', all trade with Eire should be stopped because 'People will always remember the loss in men and ships Eire has caused us' (20/3/1944, *TNA, INF 1/292*). Though some attitudes were less vitriolic, arguing the American Note was 'pre-mature' and that to agree 'would have been for Eire tantamount to declaring war on the Axis', many still argued 'de Valera's refusal was unrealistic' (20/3/1944, *TNA, INF 1/292*). Northern Irish reaction was most strong and lasting, even arguing for stronger measures, including the closure of the border (20/3/1944, *TNA, INF 1/292*). Reactions of 'approval for the action taken', feeling that 'it should have been done long ago' and 'a desire for stronger measures', were repeated for several weeks, with a report writer noting a month later that attitude on Ireland was 'again on familiar lines' (20/3/1944, 4/4/1944, *TNA, INF 1/292*). HI reports indicate, from this point on, unchanging

British opinion, but Northern Irish opinion reportedly came to accept the isolation of the whole island 'philosophically' and without complaint (12/4/1944, *TNA, INF 1/292*).

Reports on public opinion also indicate that Ireland was now becoming irrelevant. As the war was being won, newspaper reports show more dismissiveness, condescension, and anger, but with less frequency. One report, entitled 'De Valera Talks for Ten Minutes and Says Nothing', on de Valera's reply to Churchill's speech announcing the isolation of Ireland, includes a blunt comment from Lord Bennet at the Admiralty that 'Eire makes me sick' (*Daily Express*, 15/03/1944, p.3). Arguing that the reasons for isolating Eire have 'all along been sufficiently

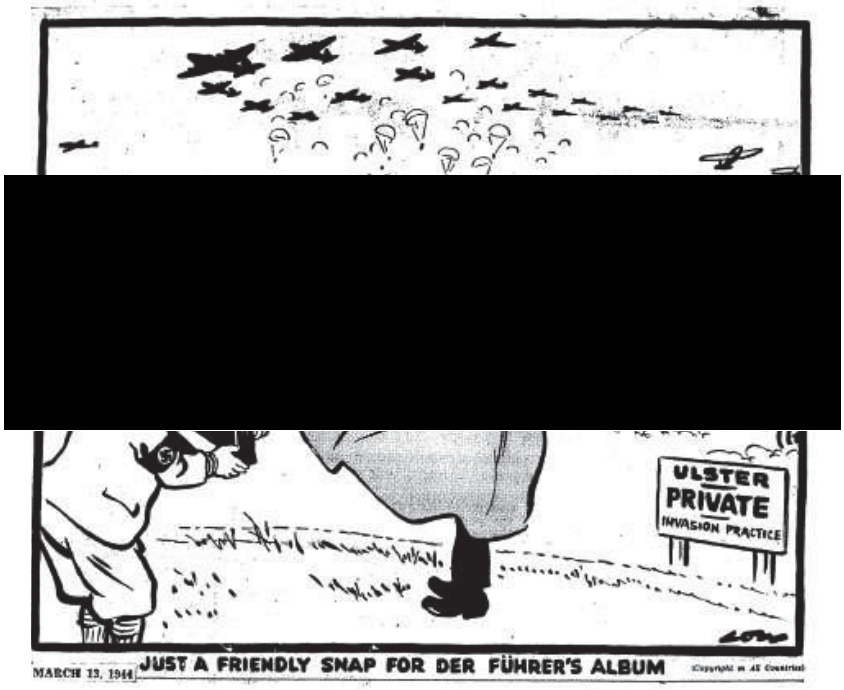


Figure 15: Intelligence Leakage (Daily Mail, 13/03/1944)

obvious' and that the Irish had acted with impunity, some regarded the isolation of Ireland as a 'condign punishment' (*Aberdeen Press & Journal*, 12/03/1944, p.1). Once more, despite previous protestations, denial, and a dearth of evidence, it was widely reported that Ulster MP Sir Hugh O'Neill charged that 'U-boats have made contact with enemy agents in remote harbours in the west of Ireland in recent weeks', the IRA was persistently active and that Eire's neutrality was still a 'constant peril and injury to the Allied Cause' (*Dundee Courier,* 17/04/1944, p.2). Newspaper comment also pointed out 'the greatest paradox of all', that neutrality had hardened

the case for partition and caused the building of 'a solid wall of Sassenach prejudice', this point being illustrated below with a cartoon of de Valera between Churchill and Hitler captioned 'Try another Blarney stone Mister, you have worn out this one' (*Birmingham Gazette*, 14/03/1944, p.2). Letters to the editor also evidence continued belief in the worst of the Irish, with a typical example arguing 'that de Valera's government has done just nothing for England in this war', adding that Eire must 'justify themselves' in the eyes of the world (*Birmingham Mail,* 16/03/1944, p.3).

By 1944, when U-boat fraternisation charges returned, the majority had been disproved by Irish intelligence and reality had been accepted by British Intelligence agencies. Nevertheless, four years after the Irish governments first requests that the British and American Presses be persuaded not to publish unfounded accusations, Walshe found it necessary to issue a memo listing of Press 'Misrepresentations' to Irish representatives abroad, which attempted to dispel rumour and assumption with pertinent fact (*NAI, DFA Paris Embassy P48/2*, 24/04/1944). The requirements of O'Drisceoil's 'double game' were such that, before it was clear that the Allies would win the war, the Irish and the British governments, could see the advantage of keeping Anglo-Irish collaboration secret, but this did not stop the Irish government consistently arguing against the most blatant accusations of perfidy. It also did not stop false accusations being given legitimising weight by the American Note and the isolation of Ireland, as Walshe had argued (*NAI, DFA Secretary's files A53*, 14/03/1944). The 'double game' gave no protection against condemnation by a British public predisposed to expect the worst from Ireland and disbelieving of the subtleties of 'friendly neutrality'. Public opinion, as it became clearer that the Allies would win against the barbarism of Nazism, would become stronger in its casting of the neutral Irish as an enemy.

7.11 Condolences and Repercussions

Some public opinion had long interpreted neutrality as likely to bring disgrace to Eire, a 'humiliation which will be theirs when they are unable to claim a place in the ranks of those who

put everything else aside in order to assure victory for freedom' (*Birmingham Gazette,* 31/03/1941, p.4). By 1943, even joining the war was not considered to be a mitigation of Ireland's actions. Departments reporting to the War Cabinet urged that British public opinion would resent Eire joining the war late as she would be gaining from the effort put in by those who had been in from the start and could therefore gain an undeserved seat at the Peace settlement (3/9/1943, *TNA, CAB 65/39/18*). HI reports confirm that 'the government's decision to exclude neutrals has been widely welcomed' and, predictably, in Ulster people felt Eire should not have a place at the Peace conference[108] on the 'specious' grounds that a considerable number of their nationals had fought with the allies (21/11/1944, *TNA, INF 1/292*). The American Note Crisis had bolstered and solidified prejudice toward Ireland's participation in any Post-war settlement or organisations. However, worse was to come as Ireland's diplomatic policy became thoroughly out of step with almost the rest of the world.

De Valera, being so adherent to diplomatic exactitude throughout the war as to feel able to reject the demands of the American Note, despite fears that it could lead to invasion, continued his adherence by personally giving his condolences on Hitler's death to the German Minister in Dublin[109]. Though this was diplomatically correct, and was later characterised as a courtesy to Hempel, the effect on British public opinion was disastrous. Eire and Salazar's Portugal were the only neutral states to offer condolences on the death of the German leader. While evidence of the Holocaust was emerging, anything less than total condemnation of Hitler seemed conciliatory, and some of those who had supported Irish neutrality in previous controversies were conflicted over de Valera's action. Anglo-Irish novelist Pamela Hinkson, who had previously lauded the contribution of Irish people to the Allied Forces, now admitted the condolences 'must remain the strangest of all the strange pages that Mr de Valera has written in Irish History' (*The Times*,

[108] As the Irish Republican proto administration had attempted to do in failing to achieve recognition at the Paris Conference in 1919.

[109] This visit was not an official visit as it did not take place at the German legation but at the German Ministers home (Keogh, 1989, p. 72), which some also saw as an indication of de Valera's deviousness in avoiding censure by resorting to a technicality (Duggan, 1989, pp. 241-243). However, curiously, De Valera never denied his visit was official though, he could have done, and there is some evidence that his act was one of personal regard towards Hempel, for whom he had personal respect (Keogh, 1989, p. 74)

17/05/1945, p.5), and argued those in Ireland who have lost relatives in the British Forces 'may find their sense of humour…in abeyance' (*The Times,* 15/05/1945, p.5) after this act. Though some letters to the editor argue that condolences were offered 'strictly in accordance with diplomatic usage' and a *Times* editorial urged that readers 'remember that they are neutrals and must be expected to act as such' (*The Times*, 15/05/1945, p.5), most opinion argued this stance was an indication of inflexibility at best, and at worst, toadying immorality. Indeed, two days later, in the same paper these actions were charged as exhibiting de Valera as 'a totalitarian termite, incapable of departing in any circumstance from the conventions of diplomacy' (*The Times,* 17/05/1945, p.5), evidencing a change of the papers opinion to reflecting that of the public.

The tone of letters in *The Times*, notwithstanding the above 'termite' analogy, was more measured than that of many other newspaper letters page, and the scope of opinion wider, but still generally reflected the prevailing view that de Valera's condolences were unjustified. Historian Basil Williams wrote in *The Times*, in civil tones, that though the condolences would be justified in ordinary circumstances, the discovery of the death camps made 'the formal condolences of a Christian government seem singularly out of place' (*The Times*, 21/05/1945, p. 5). Correspondence in the *Birmingham Mail* typifies the sweep of opinion on Ireland, with correspondents arguing de Valera was 'principally if not wholly responsible' for neutrality against the wishes of the Irish people (*Birmingham Mail,* 21/05/1945, p.3), that 'a visit to Buchenwald or Belsen would be good for him', that the best thing for him was to join Hitler and Mussolini 'where they are now' and because he was 'one snake St Patrick had forgotten' (*Birmingham Mail*, 19/05/1945). This tone was also reflected in letters from Irish people in Britain who argued his stance 'selfish' and 'stupid' and that it cast the Irish as 'nothing better than Nazi champions' (*Birmingham Mail*, 19/05/1945), whilst another reminded his fellow exiles that England had given them a living while de Valera 'wanted to put us on the dole' (*Birmingham Mail,* 21/05/1945, p.3). However, some Irish in Britain interpreted these attitudes as 'trying to make themselves secure' when it was unnecessary because Eire had acted with strict neutral propriety and 'we had no choice but to remain neutral' (*Birmingham Mail*, 21/05/1945). However, the impossibility of the

position of Eire in the latter stages of the war was also noted, arguing that if de Valera had joined the Allies after it became clear they would win, 'he would have been branded by most English men as a toady and a hypocrite' (*Birmingham Mail*, 21/05/1945). In general, by 1945, British public opinion was finding no excuse for Eire to have been neutral, to have given condolences and to have refused the American Note. It was also equally clear that most believed a change to these stances would have been interpreted as cynical attempts to profit from a war in which they had taken no part. In effect Eire was damned if they did and damned if they did not.

This interpretation was further reinforced by Churchills victory speech which singled out de Valera and the Irish State as having been a consistent vexation and provocation throughout the war but nevertheless praised the Irish people who had joined the British Forces. In this speech Churchill appeared to agree with the opinions of those who felt invasion of Eire justified in order to protect Britain and believed in Irish collaboration with the Axis powers[110], despite British Intelligences conclusion that in Eire 'Everything humanly possible was done to take steps to ensure that Eire should not be a base of for the operations of enemy secret agents against this country and to safeguard vital allied operations' (Petrie, quoted in O'Halpin, 2003, p. 15). Though Maffey disagreed with some of what Churchill intimated in his comments about de Valera, his 'frolicking' with the Axis legations and the actions of those Irish who joined the British services, his assessment of the damage done to Anglo Irish relations was for the most part correct. Maffey argued 'something was lost on the moral plane by suggesting that we might have seized' the Treaty Ports, the majority of Irishmen in the British forces were 'supporters of Mr. de Valera and …neutrality', that Churchill gave 'prominence to Mr de Valera, attacked him personally and thereby introduced him to the spotlight and a world radio contest' which gave him 'opportunity of escape', and that these errors outshone de Valera's mistake on sending condolences on Hitler's death (21/05/1945, *TNA, DO 35/1230/8*). Churchill's speech was generally welcomed because it reflected popular opinion, and reflected a simplified version of events, but that is not to say it was

[110] '…with restraint and poise…we never laid a violent hand upon them, which at times could have been quite easy and quite natural and left the de Valera Government to frolic with the German and later with the Japanese representatives to their hearts content' (W.S. Churchill, 13/05/1945).

not criticised. Newspapers widely reported the opinion of *The Irish Times* which had criticised Churchill for going possibly 'a little too far' and being guilty of 'overstatement', adding that 'everybody, including Mr Churchill, knows perfectly well that, taken by and large, Ireland's neutrality was wholly benevolent in respect of the United Nations' (*The Irish Times*, 15/05/1945, p.3). *The Manchester Evening News*, and others, relayed the *Irish Times* editorial without comment, but subtitled the article 'Not Even Dev Neutral' (*Manchester Evening News*, 15/05/1945, p.3), whilst the *Hartlepool Daily Mail* recounted a similar interpretation directly beside a piece on General Montgomery's tribute to his staff officer, 'a Gallant Irish Boy', who had died in an accident after the peace (*Hartlepool Daily Mail*, 15/05/1945, p.4), emphasising the undeniable contribution of many Irish people.

Churchill's criticism drew many letters to the editor in support of the Irish stance mostly from those identifying as Irish living in Britain. These supported the denial of the Treaty Ports as it would have drawn attack and started a new civil war, as well as confirming the suspicions that 'Britain could not have been trusted to hand the ports back at the end of hostilities' (*Birmingham Mail*, 21/05/1945). Some reminded readers of de Valera's proscribing of the quasi-Fascist Blueshirts in 1933 (*Yorkshire Post,* 25/05/1945, p.2), one of the first anti-fascist actions in Europe, and that Ireland had never been an aggressive nation, had defended herself and need not apologise for neutrality (*Birmingham Mail*, 19/05/1945) because it had succeeded in saving Eire from the devastation of war. This opinion was most famously espoused by George Bernard Shaw in a letter to *The Times* which departed from his previous opinion that neutrality could not work for Ireland. In 1945 Shaw gave de Valera credit for consistency and defending Eire from *all sides* while characterising his actions as being 'a welcome relief from the chorus of retaliatory rancour and self-righteousness then deafening us since the end of the war'. Shaw concluded that 'he got away with it triumphantly', despite some questionable decisions, by keeping out of the conflict (*The Times*, 18/05/1945, p.5).

Surprisingly neither HI nor MO evidence any public response the Irish element in Churchill's speech. It is tempting to argue that after the combined effect of the refusal of the

American Note and the misguided condolences on Hitler's death, opinion against Ireland had already passed its apogee, and Churchill's speech only reflected public opinion so antagonistic that it was felt beyond further expression. However, there are some mentions of Ireland in this period that tend towards a different conclusion; that the problem of Eire had passed, was no longer worthy of comment, or was eclipsed by other, more immediate, concerns on reconstruction. A cartoon in the *Lancashire Daily Post* indicates the some of the dismissiveness that could now be attributed to Ireland in March 1944, when it was clear that the Allies were winning the war. A front-page cartoon, alongside an article relating attempts in the Commons to raise sanctions against Eire, shows Uncle Sam and John Bull looking down on a sheepish de Valera, sat on his tiny island, playing a harp whose strings spell the word 'neutrality', above the title 'Still "Harping" on it' (*Lancashire Daily Post*, 13/03/1944, p.1), indicating that the Irish stance was now irrelevant. Such dismissiveness may explain why Ireland seemed to be absent from public opinion when it had previously been perceived a clear and present danger to the security of Britain and the Allied Armies. The only 1945 mention of Eire in MO after Churchill's victory speech comes as part of a report on the 1945 election where it is clear the main concern of the respondent is lack of food.

Figure 16: Harping on (Lancashire Daily Post, 13/03/1944)

Despite continued distrust of the Irish, who are accused of having a 'glut' of potatoes but withholding them from Britain as 'some kind of racket', the respondent tellingly concludes hunger is more important to him, writing 'I'd sooner have the war back again if this is peace!' (*MO File Report 2270a - A Report on the General Election June-July 1945*). By the end of 1945 Ireland had been proved to be once more inconsequential, after becoming a continual bugbear for those looking to explain complex problems simply, and by blaming a people who had been proved to no longer share British values forged in the fire of war.

7.12 Conclusions

The British public, true to a tradition of ambivalent feeling about Ireland and the Irish, at the beginning of the war, both expected help from the Irish and perfidy from the IRA, exacerbated by the problem of having an open border on British soil. Concern about an Irish fifth column was further shaped by deep-rooted, cultural stereotypes that the Irish could be expected to be violent, unstable, moral cowards, and that the country could be whipped into an anti-British frenzy by a republican minority, identified with de Valera and his government. These attitudes shaped not only the analysis of intelligence on Ireland, but the type of information produced by private citizens, intelligence agents and the British press (McMahon, 2008, p. 326). In reality, as O'Halpin points out, the menace to British safety that Eire represented was offset by valuable intelligence co-operation which allowed for the British Forces in Northern Ireland to jointly plan with their Southern counterparts to plan the defence of Ireland in the event of German invasion (O'Halpin, 2003, pp. 53-54). The needs of the finely balanced 'double game' also required the use of governmental policies with two different objectives, that is simultaneously pressuring the Irish for use of the Treaty Ports alongside gaining valuable intelligence, and a commitment that Ireland would not be used as a base from which to attack Britain. This milieu caused even the most ridiculous rumours of Nazi activity to be given credence.

Initial concerns over a 'fifth column' in Eire initially concentrated on a fear of IRA activity, but later, after it became clear the IRA had been controlled, concentrated on the prospect

of German espionage and the activities of the Axis legations in Dublin. These often concentrated on suspicion that U-Boats could and were using the West coast of Eire to hide at best, and to refuel and land spies at worst. Despite official denial from Eire and British ministers insisting there was no evidence of this, these rumours were never totally quashed. The presence of Axis nationals so close to Britain caused concern and further rumour that thousands were present in Eire and were forming an intelligence network guided by the German legation. By 1941 the German Legation were being portrayed as a 'Trojan Horse' within the empire, but specific instances of intelligence leakage were rare. Two instances of specific problems caused by leakage from Eire are linked to the broadcast of information on weather conditions from the German legation which could have easily been gained from other sources. The shock of failure in these circumstances allowed for the hunting of a scapegoat, and the 'double game' allowed these failures to be laid at Eire's door. There were however some dissenting voices in this discourse, arguing that Eire had taken the steps necessary to prevent her territory from being used to attack Britain and that expecting Eire to accede to some of the strongest demands from the British government would negate neutrality and infringe on Irish sovereignty.

Yet these opinions only reduced in frequency in the years between greatest fear of invasion of Britain, around the Fall of France, and the American Note Crisis, when Eire was once more at the forefront of Britain's fears. The American Note achieved its aim of isolating Eire but also confirmed for most that Eire had always been on the wrong side by resisting the Allies outlook on the war and thereby aiding the Axis. The Note also validated, as Roy Foster, argues the 'Conception that neutral Ireland was a viperous nest of German agents (which) outlived the second world war –German spies in Ireland· entered the folklore' (Foster, 1988, p. 560). Its refusal coupled with de Valera's condolences on Hitler's death confirmed the immorality of Eire's neutrality, and even that Eire had acted as a neutral but had in fact shown its sympathy with Germany. The range of retaliatory measures demanded by some of the public and newspapers indicate some of the depth and ferocity of anger. Churchills speech acted as a further confirmation of these opinions, by expressing the general opinion, but also acted as a brake on growing anger,

by looking to the future. Thus the 'Irish Question' was swiftly eclipsed by the need to make the peace and rebuild Britain. This post-war lack of interest in, and respect for Eire and the Irish, is also reflected in the way that emerging news after the war tended to confirm that Irish neutrality had indeed been 'benevolent' and the threat from Nazi espionage had been exaggerated, yet still did not affect British opinion. British Intelligence, which had been generally appreciative of their Irish counterparts, was able to gain post-war intelligence from Germany which proved the German attitude towards espionage in Eire. Newspapers reported in December 1945 that Major General Lahousen, surprise witness for the prosecution in the Nuremburg trail, reported that after a key Irish revolutionary figure[111] 'mysteriously died' aboard a U-boat while crossing the English Channel', 'The affair practically ended all Nazi enterprises in as far as Ireland was concerned' and indicated that all spies sent were caught (*Western Daily Press,* 15/12/1945, p.6). After the war, in less public channels, Cecil Liddell wrote that after June 1940 'no single case of espionage or sabotage by the IRA or by the Germans through the IRA is known to have occurred' (Cecil Lidell, Quoted in O'Halpin, 2003, p. 56) and Godfrey reported from the Admiralty that 'As we now know from German records, no naval activities favourable to the Germans took place in Eirean waters, and there is no evidence of the Eirean coast being used for U-boat, or supply bases' (Aug 1947, *TNA, ADM 22/3486*). However, cultural antipathy and the exigencies of war, made those less informed more likely to conclude the exact opposite had occurred.

[111] Sean Russell, then Head of the IRA Army Council

8 CONCLUSIONS

The Irish stance in World War Two has been characterised variously as based on insecurity, stubbornness, and smugness, and as being short-sighted, regressive, and morally ambiguous. Several analyses of neutrality judge it by its morality in the face of Nazism. Most notably Brian Girvin has argued that after it was clear that the Allies would win, it would have been advantageous for Eire to join the war at little cost and with the probability of gaining unification with NI (Girvin, 2006, pp. 320-331). Ferriter counter-argues that, in the Irish context, 'de Valera was surely correct to bring the struggle for Irish independence to its logical conclusion by implementing and independent foreign policy', and that Girvins argument underestimates the importance of the issue of sovereignty, that this represented (Ferriter, 2007, pp. 254-255). Girvin also gives no credit to the outcome of this battle to remain neutral and independent; a pride in Irish identity and exceptionalism (Fanning, 1983, pp. 126-127). Girvin argues that after Pearl Harbour, entering the war would have been possible and desirable for Ireland, but rejects the argument that this would have been tantamount to admitting neutrality, and the assertion of sovereignty it represented, was wrong (McCullagh, 2018, p. 258). The historical debate on the issue of Irish neutrality is decidedly less controversial among those studying the British experience of the Second World War. The issue of Ireland is curiously absent in the British experience, despite the fractious interdependence of the two nations in this period.

British contemporary popular opinion on Ireland and the Irish has been under researched. Sources previously used have indicated that Irish neutrality was not as injurious to Anglo-Irish relations as it might have been. However, using this thesis' contemporary sources to exclude nostalgic amnesia, more immediate and evocative opinion has been uncovered than has been analysed heretofore. This evidence shows that, at the beginning of the war, Irish neutrality was regretted but not the cause of unwarranted anger or apprehension. Contemporary sources show that Britain did not perceive the Irish as being wholly 'foreign', rather a nationality still somehow a part of the United Kingdom, or an independent Dominion of the British Empire. Dominion

status had given Ireland the same level of independence as Canada and South Africa in British law, as able to decide her own foreign policy as the others after the Statute of Westminster. However, this level of independence was not expected of Ireland by British people, despite evidence that the Irish themselves were incrementally rescinding their status as part of the Empire. Indeed, by 1939 Eire had become all but a republic in name without the British people absorbing this change or recognising that Ireland was now following its own course apart from Britain.

The divergence between the two nations could no longer be ignored by the time France was defeated in 1940, and the threat of British invasion was at its height. Fear of encirclement brought Eire into a focus for many, as it had never been before. From this point divergent national identities evolved gradually. Irish identity was shaped by her use of powers of self-determination, and British identity being shaped by experience and perceptions of the course of the war. The power of imperialist and colonialist attitudes also meant that many still tended to believe in the Empire's civilising and improving mission, an extension of the British 'character', brought to inferior nations to aid their progress. As the evidence of the MO 1939 Race survey, and Alan Allport's theory of Lord Of the Rings inspired 'Shire Folk' (Allport, 2020) suggest, many tended to believe in this civilising mission without knowing much about the Empire itself. The 'civilising mission' assumed that any Empire country was still beholden to Britain in thanks for its civilisation. Many still believed in a 'loyalty' owed to Britain from the new Eire and believed Eire could not legally declare neutrality, most notably Churchill, who believed Eire was not a Dominion in terms of defence. He, and others, in effect denied what Attlee declared to be the 'principal result' of the Statute of Westminster, that is 'the equality of all the Dominions in the Commonwealth' (Attlee, 1954, p. 68). Additionally, the 1938 Anglo-Irish Agreement was interpreted, though this was never part of the Treaty, as a promise to return the Treaty Ports in wartime, despite their dilapidated condition making them valueless if held against the cooperation of the Irish. Though some there were voices which disagreed with these assumptions, found mostly in informed official government circles and in the editorials and letters to the editor of the broadsheets, most voices in the most popularised discourse of the everyday, agreed that Eire *owed* Britain her

allyship and bases. Effectively British assumptions created an expectation which would be denied by Eire, creating resentment at 'treachery' based on a conception of Irishness that neither existed nor was recognised by the Irish themselves. The Irish had formed their own state, separate from Britain, now able to pursue an independent foreign policy legally, and by exploiting Irelands geographical position as an island removed from feasible potential attack by a continental enemy. The shock of Blitzkrieg, and an inability to believe the Irish could effectively govern themselves, combined to project an image of an unprotected and vulnerable flank to the west of Britain.

Additionally, before Blitzkrieg in the West, neutrality had not yet been proved worthless as a defence and was tolerated of Ireland because it still could be rescinded. The failure of neutrality to protect the European neutrals seemed to confirm that 'one of the casualties of this war has been the concept of Neutrality' (*The Times,* 13/07/1940, p.5) and MO subsequently reported the public 'spontaneously blamed' the Nazi's sweep into France on the 'Neutrals' and to a lesser extent the French, King Leopold, and the British Government (*MO File Report 172 - Morale 3rd June (Misnamed 'Pilot Study on ARP Preparedness')*, 1940). Neutrality in general was felt a 'broken reed' (*Daily Record*, 02/07/1940, p.6), so much so that Ireland was often expected to be the next neutral to fall, despite the protection offered by her geographical position as an island on the periphery of Europe. Now neutrality, combined with defencelessness combined to create an even larger threat. Not taking preventative action was now seen as being inviting invasion and destruction, and as the war progressed and Ireland suffered shortages through secret blockade, diplomatic pressure, and political isolation, being passive rather than active, was increasingly cast as wilful isolationism, and regression.

As the formative experience of war was active for Britons, neutrality was interpreted as passive in Eire. The effects of the war on Eire were interpreted as *absent* and *negative,* rather than simply *different,* thereby encouraging an interpretation, as every experience of ordinary people was overtaken by the needs of progressing the war, that everything that occurred in Eire was *oppositional* to that which occurred in Britain. In fact, the war had accelerated change in the role of the state politically, socially, and economically, creating a much more interventionist state, just

it had in Britain. This oppositional state in Eire was also seen as a natural outcome of cultural expectation that Eire would be a frustration to British aspirations. This meant that not only neutrality, but *Irish* neutrality, was reserved for disapproval and ignominy. Despite evidence that Irish neutrality worked to keep Ireland out of the war, prevent loss of Irish lives, and damage to the Irish economy, Irish neutrality was deemed illegal, illogical, pernicious, prejudicial, and inimical to Irish interests as well of those of the rest of the world. Indeed, Irish neutrality also stands out from her peers especially when this is considered in terms of the contemporary formation of the Myths of Britain and World War Two. In Harold Nicolson's 1939 polemic 'Why Britain is at War' the writer asserts that the British people supported the war for two reasons working in tandem: self-preservation and outrage (Nicolson, 1939, pp. 128-129). For Britain, the US, though neutral, was acting on both these interests, while Eire was sidestepping one and provoking the other. Britain acquiesced to US neutrality because it aided British preservation with materiel, loans, and food. Switzerland provided banking, and Portugal secret Allied bases, while Spain and Turkey had strong links to Germany and these either provided utility to the Allies, or their attack would provoke the Axis. American Neutrality was initially considered by *The Times* as valid because it was buoyed by the most 'scrupulous adherence to the conventions' of international law (*The Times*, 06/11/1939, p.3). Popular opinion at first felt the American stance disappointing (11/06/1940 & 14/06/1940, *TNA, INF 1/292*), 'selfish' (20/06/1940. *TNA, INF 1/292*), 'opportunist', and it's help 'unexpected' (20/06/1940, *TNA, INF 1/292*). Though there was some anger was expressed (07/06/1940, *TNA, INF 1/292*), most opinion on US neutrality was marked by resignation (07/06/1940. *TNA, INF 1/292*) and a number felt that Roosevelt was doing everything possible (11/06/1940, *TNA, INF 1/292*). This was an acceptance rarely accorded to de Valera and the Irish. Though there were indications that US neutrality was expected to end as the war progressed (06 & 21/06/1940, 05/07/1940 & 06, 20 & 28/08/1940, *TNA, INF 1/292*), and some expected Eire to do the same, attitudes to the US were never couched in derision, abuse, condescension, or contempt. It was dangerous to burn bridges with America. Britain accepted neutrality on condition that it worked in their interests, and it was expressed by a nation not less powerful.

British everyday activity was so overtaken by the exigencies of war that people's identity began to be shaped, harnessing British need for self-preservation and expression of moral outrage. Britain aspired to become stoic in the face of attack, uncowed by the onslaught of the Blitz, defiant of Nazi attack, and united, alone, in the face of a brutal amoral enemy, that was destroying small nations, and the spirit of democracy and tolerance all over the world. This spirit of resistance, the 'blitz spirit', also led to a 'people's war' mentality, where everyone 'was in the same boat', and all were subject to rationing and conscription into the services or war work. Propaganda buoyed this sense that everyone had a part to play in the war. Though this experience was not universal by any means, as many historians have proved, it was a myth which helped ordinary people come to terms with the war, and to believe that something better was to come after its end. This created a type of passive high morale, one to be faced because there was no alternative. This lack of alternative that was projected onto Ireland; belief that Ireland was no different from Britain meant that it also had no alternative.

But Ireland's situation was different. Her geographical and political situation meant she had an alternative. Its policy defended Irish independence from both belligerent alliances without being dragged into war, where appeasement had failed. Irish neutrality was Eire 'punching above her weight' in terms of European power relations, and this is doubtless partly explains the frustration caused by dogged adherence to policy which was working for Irish interests. Essentially Eire had enhanced her independence by temerity, against all expectation and conventionality, in a world of 'Realpolitik'. This temerity was not showing outrage to Germany but causing it to Britain by asserting her independence. Eire was a country smaller, weaker, formerly a vassal nation, and was *inferior* to Britain, yet had played its diplomatic cards well. In effect, Irish neutrality played out as the Eire government, supported by its people, wanted it to. However, in doing so Ireland had become a manifestation of all things opposite to the new cultural identity to be formed in post-war Britain. Irish values were considered oppositional to everything Britain had fought for and won, and Ireland and the Irish were to be progressively considered as foreign to British ideals and aspirations. Britain had, by the end of the war finally recognised,

through Ireland's actions, that Eire was culturally and politically separate, and no longer shared the values that made up British identity.

The influence of this has is lasting and pervasive, being 'a serious psychological barrier on the British side to a normalised relationship between the two states' (Fitzgerald, 2005, p. 26). As the war progressed, Britons appeared to realise that the Irish and British cultures were diverging in a way that could no longer be ignored. Previously considered to be part of the Empire, politically and culturally, initially the British public opinion was unable to believe that the Irish public supported neutrality, preferring to believe them 'misled' by their nationalist government and leaders. This narrative emerged in all sources to varying degrees and was notable when people considered the motivations of those Irish who joined the British Forces. These were believed to be supportive of British war aims despite their adherence to the policy of neutrality, indicating that support of the war was what made Irishness acceptable to most at this time. But as it became clearer that Eire would not change course, the narrative changed towards one of wilful abdication of responsibility. Eire had been a friendly neutral but was left with 'a major credibility problem in a world which was to be shaped by the victors' (Keogh & Nolan, 1994, p. 130).

Furthermore, the end of the war, so disruptive and deadly, bred a priority for most to return to normality. As Sonya Rose has argued 'wider questions seemed less pressing' (Rose, 2004, p. 87) and an understanding of Eire in the circumstances, and in the light of dismissive attitudes to the 'troublesome' Irish, was of practically no interest. The only concern for many was the treatment of those Irish who had fought in the Forces, with notable comment in newspapers and various government departments at the actions of the Irish state against those who had deserted from the Eire Army. Strategically it had also been proved, somewhat begrudgingly for those who felt NI just as 'Irish' as Eire, that only NI was important to British defences. In the strategic worth of the NI state, as well as in Northern Unionist eyes, the war had been 'final rejection by Irish nationalism of all things British' (Kennedy, 1988, p. 234). Differing conceptions of the war served to alienate Britain from Eire and by extension NI was rewarded with a

commitment that NI would never be ceded to Eire without the consent of the majority, and Britain supported the US plan to keep Eire out of the United Nations for decades hence.

Eire was also lucky to have avoided becoming of strategic value, or the level of animosity may have intensified, perhaps even to the point of invasion. Such a possibility convinced some that Eire deserved to be coerced by Britain, and had acted, short of military involvement, in ways which acted against the British interest, and *as if she were an enemy*. However, Irish neutrality had allowed British sensibilities to finally accept the separate national identity of the Irish and allow for the Irish to be let go from the empire in 1949, without major dislocation, or an admission of the commonwealths loss or failure. The Second World War became the precursor to the Republic of Ireland and created the stage for the bloodless final act of Independence. For most Britons the British experience of the war had proved Ireland against them.

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